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# THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF FEEDING HUNGRY CHILDREN IN NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS

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## **ABSTRACT**

The politics of feeding hungry children in New Zealand schools remains contested. It is described in this thesis as political dynamics between various groups in society. It does this by focusing on contemporary political, social and ideological machinations around school food programmes, child rights in a local and international context, bureaucratic attitudes, the assessment of risk, and practices and attitudes surrounding poverty and disadvantage. Through semi-structured interviews nine New Zealand participants were questioned to determine their views, which by association were informed by their organisational roles. The interviewees were: three charity managers, three low-decile primary school principals, and one senior government official from each of the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Development. The Government ministry participants acknowledged difficulties in assessing the problem and were uncertain whether existing school and charity initiatives were necessary, effective or sustainable. They also suggested that food programmes were a Band-Aid solution, rather than a planned and coordinated response. For the school principals and charity leaders interviewed, feeding hungry children was their first priority. They also saw the problem of hungry children as firmly in their hands because of the absence of alternatives. All of the participants agreed that hungry children were a problem for the whole of society and that government, social services, communities and schools should work more closely together to solve it. There were however fundamental differences between interviewees' opinions, and the solutions they offered were generally limited to current institutional realities and organisational practices, rather than advocating radical change. Their informed views and the literature reviewed characterize a stark reality in schools and government. This reality means some New Zealanders favour feeding children in schools and others don't, while many children remain hungry to some degree throughout each school day. The facts surrounding hungry children in New Zealand are surprisingly little publicised; instead it is common for people to blame the parents of these children. Government politicians have pandered to these public attitudes and questioned evidence that hungry children are a serious problem, while

at the same time heralding the success of their social and economic policies in reducing inequalities. Noticeably few government departmental reports mention hungry children in schools. Arguably these official silences and avoidances are manifestations of neo-liberal and Third Way ideologies. As a consequence New Zealand children tend to be punished for their hunger and discriminated against through action, inaction, shame and ignorance. Some local councils and Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) do however report on school hunger and in some cases have provided logistical support or limited funds for school food. Businesses and charities also contribute to some school food programmes. By and large however, the resources available and the value judgments of school staff, parents and communities determine whether hungry children are fed by schools. In contrast, with respect to feeding otherwise hungry children in schools, countries with state funded school food programmes possess a more informed and responsive public service and society. The availability of school food for otherwise hungry children in these nations is considered a natural right and a public good. This thesis advocates for the care and feeding of hungry children in New Zealand schools beyond current thinking and actions. It argues that the Government should take more responsibility for feeding children and informing society, rather than perpetuating ignorance and letting some children continue to go hungry.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

But visions change, once any story is told; ways of seeing are altered. The point of a story is to present itself momentarily as complete, so that it can be said: it does for now, it will do; it is an account that will last a while. Its point is briefly to make an audience connive in the telling, so that they might say: yes, that's how it was; or, that's how it could have been.

(Steedman, 1986, p. 22)

This was a difficult story to tell reasonably because reason did not initially seem to apply to events. But for the everyday lived reality of children's hunger, it might not have been told. My hope, as Steedman, (1986) suggests, is that in the telling, this story allows people, if only briefly, to think differently. My world has certainly changed, for which I must thank those who made it possible.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In a land of plenty (Barry, 2002), surrounded by an abundance of food, some New Zealand children are regularly hungry at school. The presence of school food insecurity has been regularly reiterated over the past two decades by the Media and confirmed in recent Newspaper reports, which suggest increasing numbers of schools are providing breakfast and lunch to otherwise hungry students. Predominantly such schools draw their students from low socioeconomic or deprived areas, and primary schools are much more likely to run food programmes than intermediate or secondary schools. Sometimes food is provided by concerned teachers, paid for out of their own pockets or school funds, while more recently charities and businesses have supported and organised programmes in some schools. Ultimately each school decides in its own way whether to feed children or not.

Parents while primarily responsible for feeding their children can't always be held accountable when issues of food access and family resources are taken into consideration. Ironically New Zealand legislation suggests everyone in society is responsible for the delivery of human rights. Holding a whole society to account because a proportion of the country's children are hungry appears politically pragmatic, however it is suggested that only well informed and willing people can deliver voluntary impartial social services without the need for regulatory or legislative safety nets.

My work as an educator and child advocate led me to question the adequacy of New Zealand's response to this problem. I saw the frustration of school staff and charities, that were doing the best they could with the limited resources available to them. More concerning were the public and political reactions to hungry children in schools. Public attitudes about the problem showed that New Zealanders were predominantly informed by personal experience and values, rather than justice or child rights concerns. The reactions of politicians in the main seemed equally based on personal views and image concerns, rather than evidence or justice. Collectively these attitudes seemed weighted against



feeding children in schools. Instead wayward parents were considered the beginning and end of the problem. In essence this meant that no other solution should be considered except requiring parents to feed their children. However the problem of empty stomachs in a growing number of schools still exists, which means the problem hasn't being solved by a majority of society shaming parents.

# **RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY, RESOURCES, AND OUTLINE**

## ***Research Design***

The aim of this thesis is to explore the political dynamics which bound the problem of feeding hungry children in contemporary New Zealand schools. It is also intended that a better understanding of the issues and related dynamics could provide a way forward to solve the problem. Case studies are particularly advantageous when a researcher aims to develop a blend of commentary notions. By sourcing a wide range of discourse material, the multiple and complex notions that bound an issue can be analyzed (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Initially this process builds a framework around a problem, then examines more closely the issues, ideologies and tensions that manifest. In the case of hungry children in New Zealand schools, consideration needed to be given to an absence of official information directly concerning the problem. However an abundance of related child health, education, and social service Government information was available. Specific academic information was also scarce. Consequently media reporting, conference proceedings, local government reports, and child advocacy publications; were often relied upon as contextual and historical references. In contrast, countries with state funded school food systems produce an abundance of government and academic material specific to school food programmes and related poverty issues. These sources provided comparative data which exposed tensions and silences in New Zealand discourses.

## ***Interviews***

Indications from occasional New Zealand media reporting suggested the problem of hungry children in schools engendered intense feelings of blame and ridicule towards wayward parents. These public and political attitudes appeared to be poorly informed and reactionary. It was reasoned that people with direct influence over child hunger outcomes and policy should possess more informed views. How informed these views were and whether they could show a way forward to solve the problem, in the

long-term, was sought. How reflective and connected to actions which fed hungry children was also a consideration in interview analysis.

Interviews help to frame specific information while placing it in an historical, local, and international context provided by literature. In this research semi-structured interviews of a selected group of people, expected to have informed views, were conducted. In total nine people were approached for interview; three state primary school principals (from low decile schools), one senior person from each of the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Development, and one senior person from three different school food charities. These candidates were initially telephoned and given a brief description of the project. All agreed to be interviewed after receiving an introductory letter outlining the research project (Appendix 1). Consent forms were also sent (Appendix 2). The interviews took place between the 28<sup>th</sup> of July and the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2008. The participants were asked the same two questions followed by supplementary questions to maintain coverage of the important issues discovered in literature (Appendix 3).

### ***Theoretical Resources***

The treatment of discourse material is fundamental to this thesis. The term discourse is also frequently used and warrants definition. All texts are socially constructed in the sense they can be viewed as a negotiated enterprise concerned with the nature of interpretation and the issue being interpreted. Discourses account for differences of opinion between what is set out in a text and the reader's analysis. The language of a text also indicates various forms of meaning by how it fractures, shifts, recedes, disperses and emphasises certain dialogue. Texts can thus represent an interpretation of social conditions. Hence any statement of experience linked to a particular issue can be interpreted as a discursive practice. Power and authority, in a social context, can thus be examined and interpreted (Heyning, 1997).

Discourse differences, silences, tensions and commonalities discovered in literature and dialogue can provide a high level of saturation for focus questions. The accumulation of multiple source data also reveals relationships which help describe political or social thinking. Consequently the act of collecting and analyzing literary and qualitative participant data, using a constant comparative method, leads to broadly understood concepts about a particular issue (Glaser & Strauss, 1999, p. 40). Comparison also provides simultaneous maximization and minimization of both differences and similarities in aid of discovering categories and related theoretical properties. In this way theoretical relevance is determined (Glaser & Strauss, 1999, pp. 49-77).

Clarity can be discovered through dialogue and literature. These types of discourse represent what is intended by a writer or speaker and understood in the reading or hearing:

In seeing language as a discourse and as a social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing the relationship between texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures.

(Fairclough, 1989, p. 26)

For Michele Foucault (1972), political discourses cross over and interact. They are dialogical activities that form objects through speaking. Also discourses are ambiguous, a source of conflict and can be seen as an interlocking and changing web of conflicts, complimentary interests, silences and tensions, which circulate in the social field and form dominant and resistant strategies (Foucault, 1972, p. 92). A matrix of power relations, with points of enhanced and reduced potentialities, can also be discovered through historical links (Sawicki, 1991, p. 43).

In consideration of the research design and process, specific focus questions were formulated:

- What social, historical, and political issues frame the problem of hungry children in New Zealand schools?
- How does the New Zealand approach to dealing with the problem of feeding hungry children in schools compare to other countries?
- What perspectives and ideologies dominate discussion of the problem of feeding hungry children in New Zealand schools in 2008?
- Are there points of agreement amongst the various agencies and organisations involved in this issue which could pave the way to improved provision for hungry children in New Zealand schools in the future?

### ***Chapter Outlines***

The chapters in this thesis build upon one another to depict a set of complex social and political forces which surround hungry children in New Zealand schools. Chapter One begins by outlining the free or subsidised school food programmes of different countries. The United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), Canada and Australia were chosen because of cultural and political similarities with New Zealand. Their examples highlight differences and similarities between nations.

In Chapter Two, New Zealand's contemporary political landscape is discussed in terms of the enactment of Third Way principles in a neo-liberal deregulated economy. How these discourses translate into New Zealand's approach to child rights is then discussed. Following this the responses of Members of Parliament (MP's), media reporters, commentators and the general public provide examples of dominant notions within New Zealand society about the issue of hungry children in schools.

Chapter Three provides examples and arguments concerning social inequality, child hunger and poverty, as they have been treated by the

New Zealand Government. New Zealand's institutional reliance on quantitative methodologies is questioned through comparison with international practices and assumptions. Inherent political and bureaucratic attitudes to poverty are also discussed and related to the problem of hungry children.

Chapter Four focuses on schools as sites of change and social responsibility. It describes the complex and competing elements surrounding the feeding of hungry children in schools from two perspectives. The first perspective focuses on food insecurity in New Zealand in the absence of state funded school food programmes. New Zealand food insecurity, breakfast skipping, charity in schools, and educative approaches to nutrition, are all put into context, before being contrasted with a state funding perspective. In this way the issues, problems and merits of state funded food programmes in schools are re-examined in terms of food quality, participation, research and political dynamics. These two perspectives emphasise how thinking about particular issues is affected by circumstance.

Chapter Five analyses the interview data collected. The views of participants were expected to be informed by the organisational roles they held. Their answers about feeding hungry children in New Zealand schools were consequently analysed in terms of their understanding of the problem and their long term solutions. An overview of participant responses contributes significantly, through comparative and differential analysis, to the emerging picture of New Zealand's political dynamics around the problem of hungry children in schools.

Chapter Six reiterates the main findings of the discourse analysis, describing a political dynamics around the issue of feeding hungry children in New Zealand schools. This discussion brings together the ideas and views discovered in interviews and literature. These discourses show that conceptualisation of the problem is different depending on the presence, or absence, of State funding. The analysis also draws on the term 'concientisation' (Freire, 1976). Alternative approaches and a solution are

suggested, along with steps toward informing and changing people's perceptions. The ability of New Zealand - state and society - to respond and address the problem of hungry children in schools is challenged in the final analysis.

## **CHAPTER ONE: AN INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW AND COMPARISON**

This chapter seeks to scope the way selected countries have responded to hungry or malnourished children in schools. While it is acknowledged that political ideologies change and are reflected in approaches to social issues, the problem of child food insecurity is also about a basic human right to food for the most vulnerable. How countries respond is a test of their political ideas, social responsibility, democracy and justice.

Four countries were selected for comparison with New Zealand: the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), Canada and Australia. Each is a signatory to the same international conventions and charters associated with basic rights to food and the reduction of poverty. These countries historical development of school food programmes is considered briefly before differences and similarities are discussed later in the chapter.

Each country shares common languages, many social policy strategies and social values. Historically New Zealand has much in common with all of these countries, but more importantly differences exist which expose alternative ways of addressing and thinking about the problem of school food insecurity.

### ***The United Kingdom***

Although few details were available, charity food systems laid the historical foundations for state provisions. Government subsidised school meals were subsequently passed into British law in 1906 reaching universal free provision in the 1950's and 1960's (Atkins, 2005b). This universal provision was changed to partial funding in the 1970's. Subsidised and free school meals remain a part of the British school experience today.



In the 1930's the Milk Marketing Board piloted free milk in schools (Welshman, 1997). Scientific opinion at the time suggested children given regular milk at school performed better academically and were healthier. Support for providing milk in schools also came from the milk industry. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1934 the beginning of state subsidised school milk deliveries to schools was launched by Walter Elliot, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. The scheme was known as the Milk in Schools Scheme (MISS) (Atkins, 2005b).

The 1944 Education Act made subsidised school meals compulsory for all Local Education Authorities and in 1946 all costs to parents for MISS were abolished and the free provision of school milk in Britain was not challenged until 1968. By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, medical and consequent political opinion suggested school milk and meals would strengthen the countries future work and fighting force (Corporate Watch, 2005). The British Treasury had concerns however:

Treasury staff had been wary that subsidised school milk might create a precedent for welfare food and clothing, and they had also disputed with the Milk Marketing Board about the number of children who could be supplied for the money available.

(Atkins, 2005a, p. 68)

State funded school food programmes have a chequered history of cost cutting and deregulation. One such example was a cut to milk in schools funding in August 1970 by the UK Secretary of State, Margaret Thatcher. (BBC News, 2007; BBC: UK Confidential, 2001). The media took up the cry of "Thatcher Thatcher Milk Snatcher" (BBC News, 2007). Subsequent changes to school meals eventually saw the abolition of food standards (BBC: UK Confidential, 2001) and compulsory tendering of school catering (Corporate Watch, 2005). In the 1990's nutritionists began calling for a reintroduction of standards for school meals and MISS (Times Educational Supplement, 1995).

In 2005 Jamie Oliver, a celebrity chef, popularised the debate about the poor quality of meals in UK schools. In response to a rising tide of public opinion, National Nutrition Standards for school meals were re-introduced in September 2006 along with the establishment of the School Food Trust to help schools and caterers provide healthier food (School Food Trust, 2007).

Today in the UK some free provision of milk for pre-school children remains available. School meal subsidies target the socially disadvantaged and meals are catered at most schools. Breakfast Clubs have also become an important part of the mix under the umbrella of 'The Childrens Fund' (Evans, Pinnock, Beirens, & Edwards, 2006). Increasing school attendance and improving nutrition have also been attributed to Breakfast Clubs (Kendall, Straw, Jones, Springate, & Grayson, 2008). The free fruit and vegetable scheme in schools, a recent development, has targeted eating behaviours of young children to primarily improve nutrition. Decreasing the risk of heart disease and cancer in later life has been a noted objective. All primary school children in Scotland are eligible to receive free fruit, but in other UK regions poverty prone school populations only are targeted (MacGregor & Sheehey, 2005; Maxwell, 2008).

After a successful campaign by parent groups and a trial by the Scottish government (MacLardie, Martin, Murray, & Sewel, 2008), free school meals were announced for all Scottish junior classes in 2008 (The Scottish Government, 2008). In England a three year trial of universally free breakfasts, school meals and after school snacks in Hull has described a range of benefits to children's learning and health (Colquhoun, Wright, Pike, & Gatenby, 2008). Among these was an increased interest by parents about the food schools deliver. Also noted in the Hull trial was the benefit to working parents on low incomes, as previous subsidy cut offs had excluded their children. Any negative comments expressed by parents were associated with returning to discriminatory funding systems when trials ended. In England the government has recently announced that trials of similar schemes were about to begin (Land, 2008).

## ***United States***

Like the UK, in the USA charity food systems laid the historical foundations for the State provisions that followed (Gunderson, 1971). In 1946 President Truman signed the National School Lunch Act in response to congressional concerns about the rejection rate of draftees for World War 2 (WW2). In the last 60 years the program has grown to include the School Breakfast Program, Snack Program, Child and Adult Care Feeding Program and the Summer Food Service Program (United States Department of Agriculture, 2007). Thirty million children participate daily in the Food in Schools Program. Seventeen million of them are provided with free or subsidised meals. To receive free school meals household income levels must be below 130% of an arbitrary poverty line. Between 130%-185% of this poverty line families qualify for a subsidy. Alaska and Hawaii have higher rates of participation than other states. Generally schools in the USA need to sign up for programmes to participate. One of the latest options for schools is called Provision 2 which allows schools to receive bulk funding. These schools must make meals free to every student. This option attempts to cut down on the stigma associated with cafeteria vouchers and consequent lower participation rates. It also makes administration of the programme easier for some schools (Food Research and Action Centre, 2007).

## ***Canada***

'Breakfast for Learning' began as an organisation in 1992 when a group of magazine editors from Canadian Living saw a need for nutritious healthy meals in schools. Today their programmes are government, corporate and charity sponsored and run as clubs supported by volunteers (Breakfast for Learning, 2007).

The Canadian model has local detractors who claim food subsidies create dependency and are an inefficient use of resources (Hay, 2000). A closer look at state involvement in food programmes reveals a targeted allocation

system and food standards for meals (Breakfast for Learning, 2006). Canada has a grant system by which schools can attract funds for food programmes from government and various businesses and charity sponsors (The Department of Internal Affairs, 2007). Schools who seek to set up a breakfast and/or lunch clubs get support from organisations such as 'Breakfast for Learning' or 'Kidscan' which assist with applications for funding from the sources discussed.

### ***Australia***

Free School Milk was introduced in some Australian primary schools in the 1920's in response to noted protein and calcium deficiencies in children's diets. By the end of 1953 the logistics of Queensland's climate, teacher cooperation and distances had been overcome and one third of a pint of whole milk each day was being delivered to all Australian children. (Queensland Government Department of Education, 2007). The Australian milk scheme was abolished in 1973 after protein and calcium levels in children were no longer considered a concern, in response to teachers claims that giving out milk was not their responsibility, and because of escalating costs (Windred, 1998). A rapid decline in calcium intakes was noted following abolition (O'Dea, 2004).

In 1978 Queensland reintroduced 'The State Free Milk Subsidy Scheme' which provided milk to early childhood centres, but the scheme was discontinued in 1987 due to budget cuts (Queensland Government Department of Education, 2007).

In February 1994 the New South Wales dairy industry introduced 'The Fresh New South Wales Schools' Milk Program':

..to address the decline in general milk consumption, concern about the eating habits of children (particularly vitamin A, riboflavin and calcium intake) and the implications of those habits for the health care system as a whole, especially in relation to osteoporosis.

(Windred, 1998, p. 1)

The scheme provided labelled plain and flavoured 250 millilitres milk products in schools. 550,000 children in 1800 schools state-wide were provided with products and learning materials to support the program (Windred, 1998).

For the last 10 years The Australian Red Cross has coordinated school breakfast clubs. Participating schools organise parents to implement nutritious breakfasts, while main sponsor 'Sanitarium' provides the food. In 2006/2007 in New South Wales over 100,000 breakfasts were served by 400 volunteers. The Red Cross considers that the children in these recipient schools may otherwise have gone hungry during school (Australian Red Cross, 2006, 2007). There is evidence that some Australian schools face similar school hunger issues to those in New Zealand. Efforts to feed children are largely charity based and are generally organised on a school by school basis (Rindfleish, 2001).

### ***New Zealand***

The New Zealand Government introduced universal free Milk in Schools (MISS) in 1937:

...in order to induce children to consume more milk of good quality. When available, milk that is fresh, bottled, and pasteurized is served once daily to primary pupils.

(MacLean & McHenry, 1948, p. 172)

Free apples were also provided in 1941 "...in part to relieve the market of a surplus that developed when war in 1939 cut off export markets". (MacLean & McHenry, 1948, p. 172). The apple scheme ended when exports resumed (New Zealand History Online, 2007).

Post WW2 food habits were targeted in teacher training and the school curriculum. The government promoted healthy eating through a poster, radio and road show campaign (MacLean & McHenry, 1948, p. 173).

MISS ceased to be universally available in 1967 (New Zealand History Online, 2007). Research published in 2003 in the Journal of Public Health and Nutrition raised concern about the decline in Milk consumption in favour of less healthy beverages. It recommended that “Industry–health alliances were a good vehicle to promote milk consumption” (Wham & Worsley, 2003, p. 1).

Like many developed nations in the 2000’s New Zealand faced child dietary and exercise issues. Obesity associated with sedentary and fast-food lifestyles was targeted by several education focused initiatives to change behaviours and health outcomes. One such government initiative, Project Energise, was launched on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2005 by the Labour government Minister of Health at Bankwood Primary School in Hamilton. This project partnered the Waikato District Health Board and local health agencies with Meadow Fresh - a milk processor (a Goodman Fielder International company). Meadow Fresh provided free milk to 65 schools in the two year trial. Primarily the programme’s aim was to tackle obesity through healthy eating, education and exercise. The Minister promised to consider the results carefully when the results were known (A. King, 2005). The only other state initiative which provides school food is also an educative program. ‘Fruit in Schools’ was trialled in 2005 and introduced in a cluster of low decile<sup>1</sup> South Auckland schools in 2006 (Department of Health, 2008; Maxwell, 2008; Ministry of Health, 2007).

Free school meals were not common in New Zealand schools before the 1990’s. Since that time an increasing number of low decile schools have provided free breakfast and/or lunch programmes. Some of these programmes have been funded by schools while others have been provided through philanthropy (Doré, 2006; Education Review Office, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2006, 2007; Gerritsen, 2005; Moss, 2007; Te Ora o Manukau - Manukau the Healthy City, 2003).

In Wellington fifty percent of primary schools reported providing free breakfast and /or lunch to children by the mid 1990’s. This had increased to 74% in 2005. The principals interviewed for this research were

uncertain of their responsibility for feeding hungry children. They saw their primary concern as curriculum delivery (Gerritsen, 2005). Auckland faced similar school food demand in the 1990's (Schmidt & Fowler, 1994). Charities also experienced a growing tide of families living in poverty (Wynd, 2005). Some families decided on a regular basis to keep children at home rather than experience the shame of sending them to school without food or money (St Giles' Family Learning Centre, 1999).

Initially the response to student hunger in schools came from agents of charity in various forms. Caring people provided a largely uncoordinated response in individual schools. Eventually these efforts were joined by more organised provision from the New Zealand Red Cross, Kids Can and local organisations.

### ***Discussion***

The USA and UK each developed school food initiatives along similar lines to each other resulting in entrenched government food subsidies to schools. Both countries' systems traditionally targeted children who might otherwise not receive food from home in sufficient quantity or quality to promote immediate and long term good health (Gunderson, 1971). Recent moves in Britain have been toward more universal state provisions.

In the USA the Department of Agriculture is responsible for school meal programmes and other food assistance (United States Department of Agriculture, 2007), while in the United Kingdom the Department for Children, Schools and Families and a government-appointed Trust, are responsible for administering funds and food standards respectively (BBC News, 2005; Johnson, 2006 ). In both countries, school food subsidies significantly affect the incomes of farmers, food suppliers and caterers. Political considerations often openly relate to these sectors' needs and societal expectations. There is also a public expectation that food will be available for sale and consumption in school cafeterias or lunch rooms. In both countries the government discourses on school food programmes are

predominantly about food standards, increasing student participation rates and food program contributions to national nutrition and achievement outcomes. There is also evidence that food programmes are recognised as part of international child rights and poverty reduction obligations (HM Government, 2007; Nord & Andrews, 2002).

New Zealand and Australia can also be grouped together because neither government funds programmes to feed hungry children in schools. Both countries also ceased milk subsidies in the 1960's and 1970's respectively and after WW2 promoted a cut lunch brought from home (Curtin, 2007; MacLean & McHenry, 1948). In the absence of government intervention both New Zealand and Australia developed charity school food programmes in the 1990's in response to poverty and school food insecurity. In the absence of a hot lunch culture, as in the Northern Hemisphere, initially food charity in New Zealand focused on providing cold cut lunches and progressed to include breakfast clubs.

Little information on Canada is available beyond what has been reported. Canada is a combination of both types of approach to school food programmes and provides few further points of difference. It can be compared more closely with New Zealand and Australia than the USA or UK because of the way school programmes operate.

There are obvious differences between countries with state-subsidised food programmes and those which rely on charity to feed children in schools. School meal programmes in New Zealand, Canada and Australia are also relatively recent developments, having arisen during the 1990's as a response to child hunger. In contrast the USA and UK have historically entrenched state-subsidised systems.

Most schools in the USA and UK are built with cafeterias or lunch rooms that employ staff to dispense food, while in Australia and New Zealand schools are not designed with this in mind and charity food is dispensed by staff or community volunteers using available spaces. Also in New Zealand and Australia there is an expectation that children will bring a



packed lunch from home or in some cases buy food from school or local shops.

Finally there are historical comparisons that can be made. The UK and USA began feeding hungry and malnourished children through charities and philanthropic institutions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those programmes were the forerunners of state-funded schemes. Conversely food insecurity in Australia and New Zealand – apart from during the Great Depression (1935-45) – has been considered a relatively recent and temporary occurrence for the past two decades.

There are also similarities between selected countries. All have ongoing concerns with high intakes of unhealthy foods, and sedentary behaviours, which contribute to high levels of child diabetes and obesity. School food standards and guidelines have been universally introduced, along with health and exercise education initiatives to increase awareness and to change behaviours.

Although school governance structures vary between countries, schools or school districts in all countries can generally opt into available food programmes at their own discretion. This raises an important issue concerning the moral and practical judgments made about the needs of hungry children in schools. That some schools, or school districts, with hungry children do not participate in free or subsidised food services is problematic. Also children entitled to free or subsidised meals don't always partake of them. However, child and school participation rates internationally are generally higher in low socio-economic areas where entitlement populations are proportionally larger. In a wide range of international research shame is a noted child and family factor in non-participation, as is child food preference.

## ***Summary***

It is clear that charity responses in New Zealand, Canada and Australia have developed in the 1990's, while state funded food programmes in the USA and UK developed in response to public pressure after an extensive charity culture in the mid twentieth century. There are also notable economic and political factors associated with the introduction of state-funded systems. Both the USA and UK have large internal markets for locally grown food. The other countries listed are predominantly agricultural with relatively small populations. Consequently their food producers are more reliant on exporting produce than on domestic markets.

The way each country approaches social programmes and welfare spending directly impacts on approaches to feeding hungry children. There are many parallels in approaches between countries to reducing inequalities. However the differences which separate New Zealand also lie in the way children and their human rights are understood. New Zealand and Australian governments have avoided funding programmes to feed hungry children in schools since increasing poverty became apparent in the 1990's. The timing of poverty seems to be a critical factor, as dominant western ideologies have changed since countries like the USA and UK introduced state funded programmes. In countries with existing state funded food programmes the political vested interests in keeping such programmes prevailed when political ideologies changed. Why and how responsibility is taken by governments around this issue is not therefore based solely on need, but subject to history, circumstance, political ideology and dominant vested interests.

## **CHAPTER TWO: CONTEMPORARY NEW ZEALAND POLITICS**

This chapter continues to establish an understanding of the political elements surrounding children at school who are hungry. It focuses on contemporary New Zealand, its overarching political ideologies and their translation in terms of child rights and societal reactions.

This investigation is as much about child poverty as children being hungry at school. In New Zealand the majority of charity food programmes are in decile 1 and 2 schools - those most prone to poverty. The advent of poverty in New Zealand is unquestionable. It has been attested by historians and social commentators and described more recently as officially existing in pockets of New Zealand society. Hungry children in schools have increased in concert with social service restructuring and economic reform. Their existence has been persistent, rather than reducing, during a long period of economic growth through the 2000's. All of these points suggest a way of thinking which limits successful solutions to a simple problem of empty stomachs.

### ***The Neo-Liberal Legacy***

Cost and efficiency concerns for many governments began in the 1980's. As rapid top-down reform became the norm in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the strategies used and the changes made increasingly reflected private sector business models. Many governments began to see education and social service professionals as part of increasing social and fiscal problems. More recent international trends indicate a continued shift away from social policy being developed through discussion and consensus among government ministries and these professionals (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004).

The reform of New Zealand social services, including the education sector, removed many institutional protections for children. A proliferation of New

Right or neo-liberal thinking lead to an Agency Theory approach to public service delivery and spending (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004). What has been termed the New Zealand experiment had begun (Kelsey, 1995). Through its development, constitutional protections which would have balanced democracy, like a Bill of Rights and Constitution, were neglected. What resulted was an imbalance of power or what has been termed a constitutional crisis (Palmer, 1987, 1992).

In the 1980's New Zealand faced a debt crisis and began to address economic imbalances with neo-liberal market reforms to create a leaner, more efficient and productive economy. Unions were weakened and social protections eroded as the domestic economy was opened up to international competition. Labour and financial markets were deregulated and many state businesses and services were transferred to the private sector (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004). Business influence on education and social services began to increase with deregulation, as their vested interests grew, at the expense of professional knowledge. The two most influential government departments, The Treasury and the State Services Commission, embraced these changes and had a significant influence on public sector reform (Levin, 2001).

New Zealand's deteriorating fiscal position in the early 1990's led Government to make substantial cuts to social spending. It introduced policies which emphasised individual reliance and removed many of the remaining protections for all but the very worst off. The most significant changes affected welfare (Department of Social Welfare, 1996a, 1996b; Parliament of New Zealand, 1989; Shipley, Upton, Smith, & Luxton, 1991), health (Shipley & Upton, 1992; Upton, 1991) and education (Boston, 1999; Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 1997; Kelsey, 1993; Pool, 2000; Richardson, 1991). High unemployment, the introduction of market rents for state houses, the sale of state houses, and the consequent decreases in disposable incomes plunged many families into poverty (Wynd, 2005).

In a joint statement by the then Ministers of Social Welfare, Health, Housing and Education; the Governments intention "to encourage people

to move from state dependence to personal and family self-reliance” (Shipley, Upton, Smith, & Luxton, 1991, p. 17) became evident. However not all those experiencing poverty were willing or able to assist each other (McPherson, 2000). Effectively the State left the poorest families under increasing pressure to be self reliant, when family and community resources weren’t available to all (McPherson, 2004).

For the first time since the 1930’s New Zealand experienced significant poverty. Eighty percent of the population became economically worse off over the 1990’s. Some commentators asked if the sacrifice of employment for efficiency was necessary at all since most European countries that took a more social democratic approach to economic reform ended up better off than New Zealand (Easton, 1997b; Kelsey, 1995; OECD, 1994; Waldegrave, 1998).

As the new millennium approached the promised economic growth had not arrived and many felt New Zealand had become poorer as a result of the restructuring of services and the economy (Easton, 1997a, p. 60). Commentators on the political Left argued that the pain caused by the reforms should never be repeated by another country (Kelsey, 1995). In spite of the hardships endured by a significant proportion of the population, representatives of large corporations and the political Right felt the reforms had not gone far enough and that businesses did not get enough say in restructuring the economy (Kerr, 1998).

### ***Third Way Government***

Under Labour-led governments since 1999 many of the principles associated with Third Way can be attributed to changes in social and economic policy in New Zealand. Ministerial speeches (Maharey, 2003), academic papers (Lewis, 2004), and business publications and articles (Fletcher, 2007; Spiller, 2007) have all mentioned the Third Way of New Zealand. Apart from these references New Zealand Labour-led governments have not acquired a Third Way label, as Britain has.

For the UK and New Zealand a constrained discretionary approach to social policy has meant more than fiscal responsibility in funding services (Davies, 2005; Maharey, 2003). Government policies in both countries combine words such as productivity, competitiveness and equal opportunity when discussing social and economic objectives (Burkitt, 2006). Social justice under Third Way does not mean equality of outcome. Instead Third Way's equal opportunity principles mean keeping the best of neo-liberal economics while addressing social exclusion and investing in human capital:

It is clear from (UK) New Labour policy and literature that it emphasises equality of opportunity rather than treatment or of outcome. Consequently its social policy is integrally related to its focus upon investment in human capital. To the extent that education and training deliver an adaptable, well motivated, highly skilled and well remunerated work force, the problems with poverty and inequality will be considerably reduced.

(Burkitt, 2006, p. 8)

The investment in human capital is a key component of Third Way thinking. Human Capital Theory effectively equates labour with economic theory (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004, p. 169). Therefore, whatever a government does is in the context of a free market while remaining linked to the social (Davies, 2005). Consequently through selective investment in human capital, state governments move away from a role of provider to enabler; from a position of supporting equality of outcome to that of equality of opportunity. A targeted system of welfare designed to get more people into work is a key component. The objective, a renewal of civil society and social responsibility, embraces individualism, globalisation and economic freedom (Giddens, 1998).

Communities and individuals are expected to take these opportunities to raise their human capital through the acquisition of skills, qualifications and employment. People are also expected to make sacrifices and change their behaviour to gain the rewards - the outcomes. New

mechanisms in social and economic policy need to be introduced in order to achieve these aims (Burkitt, 2006).

For the New Labour Government in the UK Third Way principals meant the active involvement of people in their communities:

People should be encouraged to solve their own problems in part because they know from their everyday lives what the core of the problem is, and how to engage with the best way of solving the challenge; but also because tackling your own problems is a vital part of growing as a person, a source of confidence and self-respect. The same is true of communities.

(Home Office Communication Directorate, 2003, p. 1)

Community partnership is also seen as a key enabling force in Third Way New Zealand. The changes to the Local Government Act in 2002 (LGA) made consultation, monitoring and reporting on community developed outcomes mandatory (New Zealand Parliament, 2002). However this intention of the LGA is auditable but not enforceable and is therefore subject to interpretation at the local authority level.

Broadly speaking, significant policy changes such as the LGA and the neo-liberal restructuring of the 1990's devolved the overview of responsibility, structures, and funding from the state to local government level. This has engendered social service gaps that may or may not be filled by local service initiatives (New Zealand Parliament, 2002; Wallis & Dollery, 2002). As a consequence central government has increasingly taken the role of discretionary provider and enabler, intending to provide balance through coordination, targeted funding and stewardship (Burkitt, 2006). Through this enabling philosophy Territorial Local Authorities (TLA's) (New Zealand Parliament, 2002), charities (New Zealand Parliament, 2005), non-government organisations (NGOs) and businesses (Clark, 2000; Fletcher, 2007; Maharey, 2003; Spiller, 2007) have been encouraged to take on social services responsibilities. One major consequence of this approach has been a blurred line of responsibility and accountability concerning the most at-risk groups in society.

In the UK, Third Way initiatives have included public private partnerships or PPPs. These PPPs have built and managed schools using private capital and expertise while receiving government operating funds. In these cases schools are effectively businesses funded by the state. The use of business capital and expertise for government services has been problematic. Gains in the short term mean paying more in the long term in on-going costs and profit-taking (Burkitt, 2006). These partnerships can also set a precedent for the privatisation of more social services in the future (Curtis, 2003).

The New Zealand Business Council (Spiller, 2007), and a variety of business associations have been encouraged by government politicians (Clark, 2000, 2007) to form PPPs with government education institutions. For education unions, both locally and internationally, quality public education can be undermined by the hidden agendas of the private sector. This is because ultimately any business involvement in public education can only be for eventual profit (Ball & Youdell, 2007; New Zealand Education Institute, 2007).

Influencing education outcomes through different forms of partnership is becoming an important focus for New Zealand business leaders (Spiller, 2007). Sustainability in a competitive and changing global market means businesses have an increasing interest in education and social outcomes. 'Education International' suggests that these types of initiatives may create inequalities and come with strings attached:

Companies or philanthropic individuals or social entrepreneurs are also increasingly involved in initiating educational innovations. In many cases the flow of these educational subsidies only works to exacerbate existing inequalities in provision. Poor parents are unable to subsidise their children's education or mobilize philanthropy- although some charities and NGOs do target their activities on the most needy.

(Ball & Youdell, 2007, p. 32)



One example of a rapid change in the way education is privatised through PPPs is the development of private early childhood education centres. Like the UK, New Zealand recognised the need to increase the capacity of early childhood education services. This combined with strategies to get more adults into the workforce saw a rapid increase in government subsidised private providers. The New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI) – the pre-school and primary school sector union - reported in 2007 that nearly 60% of early childhood education centres were private and received 220 million dollars annually to bolster their profits from government subsidies. Although private services can expand rapidly to meet new needs, many questions about the true economic and social cost of state/private partnerships remain unanswered (New Zealand Education Institute, 2007; Penn & Randall, 2005).

Third Way approaches also include strategies to build capacity and strengthen the resilience of people in communities. These investments in human capital are considered an investment in future well-being (Jacobsen et al., 2002). However, many of the state-sponsored initiatives targeting community development rely heavily on the capacity and insights of NGOs and partners at a local level.

The enthusiasm for community capacity building has brought with it a valuable and renewed focus on the spatial dimensions of disadvantage, reemphasised the importance of community action, ownership and connection and highlighted new opportunities for better integration, coordination and partnership. However, it also brings a number of very real challenges and responsibilities to those seeking to understand and be part of it.

(New Zealand Council of Social Services, 2004, p. 13)

One such effort was 'The Collaborative Action Plan on Child Poverty'. This Manukau City Council-coordinated publication was specific in its intention to help feed hungry school children in the City. One of the key objectives was an annual review of documented service provider goals across the City. Quarterly meetings with partners were a key component of

the project once the initial plan had been published (Te Ora o Manukau - Manukau the Healthy City, 2003). After one review no further action was taken to update or build on the initial work. Although a valuable resource, arguably it could have achieved more if allowed to continue its networking and collaboration actions.

Third Way governments expect that active citizenship initiatives and increased economic productivity will lead to increased wellbeing and sustained prosperity. New Zealand government initiatives, such as Working For Families (low income adjustment for in-work families) and 20 hours (per week) free child care, all focus on supporting parents into work and are therefore primarily economic efficiency policies (Burkitt, 2006; Davies, 2005). Other countries like the USA and UK have similar policies, but also fund food programmes for those on low incomes and benefits (Evans, Pinnock, Beirens, & Edwards, 2006; United States Department of Agriculture, 2007).

Social assistance programmes are government tools to strengthen citizenship in the UK (Home Office Communication Directorate, 2003). Agreement with this approach is seen in the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development (MSD) emphasises on community and citizenship development (Ministry of Social Development, 2005, 2007a, 2007b) (Ministry of Social Development, 2006a, 2006b, 2007c, 2007d)

Our leadership of projects like The Social Report, and chairing the Social Sector Forum (Health, Education, Social Development and Justice Chief Executives' Group), helps to achieve the Government goal for cross-agency action in ensuring all families, young and old, can reach their potential.

(Ministry of Social Development, 2006a, p. 14)

The MSD's role in service mapping, and interdepartmental coordination, to improve the efficiency of services, is an important goal of government (New Zealand Parliament, 2002). On the poverty front the MSD also has the role of coordinating and leading the Reducing Inequalities Officials Committee (The Treasury, 2005b).

New Zealand's challenges in coordinating social services are inherent in the devolved social service environment created by social service restructuring. This regime of contracting specific services to non-government organisations (NGOs) and second-hand reporting back on specific outcomes can be problematic for two reasons. Firstly, what is seen and reported by contractors may be based solely on prescribed outcomes and priorities. This is because contractor survival may depend on reporting successful achievement of outcomes and avoiding problems that are outside government priorities.

Subsequently the uneven delivery of services may not assist the socially excluded and has been identified as a major risk to New Zealand children living in poverty (United Nations, 2003). These children's families are the least likely to access services and their issues are more likely to be bypassed or filtered out in consultation or reporting (Davies, 2005).

There is however effective collaborative work being done within this NGO structure at a local level. Various reports and research mention work by NGOs and assistance from regional government offices (Te Ora o Manukau - Manukau the Healthy City, 2003). One such report noted New Zealand Police and Housing New Zealand support for Hamilton school breakfast clubs. Few details about their involvement were available however (Bloy, 2005).

The Education Review Office (ERO) has also mentioned, through school audits, school food programmes throughout New Zealand. ERO reporting failed to mention children were hungry and instead concentrated on parent involvement in school food programmes as a key learning influence. Recently 'Best Practice Guidelines for Establishing Breakfast Clubs in Schools' was published by the Counties Manukau District Health Board. This collaborative work is a valuable resource for schools, but is more concerned with food quality than food insecurity. It does however contain previously unreported case histories of school food programmes in the region (Counties Manukau District Health Board, 2008).

These examples of social and health services giving practical assistance to feeding hungry children in schools, suggest that some quasi-official support is being provided at a local level. The research and local reporting discussed however suggests that this is a national problem lacking a national approach. It is not clear whether the service delivery sector has undertaken these support initiatives with or without sanction from central government.

### ***The Public Debate***

The New Zealand Public Health Commission was established by the Government in 1993 as a semi autonomous health issue watch dog. It had raised some controversial issues in its first two years, which reportedly upset the tobacco and alcohol industries (Public Health Commission, 1994). Hungry children in New Zealand schools had been occasional media items during the early 1990's, until the Public Health Commission took an interest. In 1995 they raised the issue in a report to the government (Public Health Commission, 1995). The National-led government rejected their findings and the Board of the Commission resigned in protest (Krueger, 1997). The Commission was quickly disestablished on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1995 and its duties transferred to the Ministry of Health (Health New Zealand, 2005).

Based on individual teacher and school survey data, the Public Health Commission report suggested that thirty percent (26,000) of students in 2211 schools regularly went hungry. Thirty eight percent of schools had reported providing free food, while some schools had stopped providing lunch because they could not keep up with demand. More research was recommended into the nutritional adequacy of children's diets and the feasibility of state funding for school food programmes. The Government's welfare cuts in 1991 were blamed for child food insecurity on a national scale. (Food and Nutrition Consultancy Service, 1995; Public Health Commission, 1995; Richardson, 1991).

National newspapers in 1995 reported that school principals had independently confirmed hungry students were a serious problem (Malo, 1995). In Parliamentary debates, sparked by the Commission report, a Labour Party Opposition spokesperson called on the government to fund free meals in schools (Laugesen, 1995). The Prime Minister blamed parents for not feeding their children and found it difficult to accept that any New Zealand family did not have the means to provide breakfast and lunch for their children. In his opinion children's food should come before family luxuries like tobacco, alcohol, videos and Lotto. The Social Welfare Minister also pointed out that the government had introduced special welfare grants for families in need. All they needed to do was apply for them. He certainly wasn't convinced a problem really existed and suggested that schools should set up an education program on how to make healthy lunches if there was an issue (Laugesen, 1995). The parliamentary debates quickly degenerated into rhetoric about whether the Prime Minister had been a good parent or whether the Labour Party Opposition leader had made her own school lunches (Clifton, 1995). Any constructive debate about the existence of hungry children in schools was short-lived as it was overshadowed by political point scoring and side issues (B. Edwards, 1995).

In February 2007, the new leader of the National Party, in Opposition, raised the issue of hungry children in New Zealand schools. He accused the Labour-led coalition government of being out of touch with the issue of school children's hunger (Key, 2007b). His claim that 15,000 children in New Zealand arrived at school hungry each day was rejected by the Government (Espiner, 2007). A leading newspaper report put the number of hungry children in New Zealand at just over 83,000 (Collins, 2007). Child poverty suddenly became an issue for a government which had campaigned for election on reducing child poverty. Neither of the two main political parties mentioned state subsidies or fully funded universal school meals. The Green Party however, advocated state funded food programmes for all children (Green Party, 2007).

The Labour Prime Minister, when asked in Parliament how their government's policies responded to poverty in any sustainable way replied:

Indeed I can, because in the Labour Party we believe poverty is best tackled by good policy like Working for Families, like income-related State rents, like fair labour law, like investing in programmes for our low decile schools, like the Primary Health Care Strategy, and like lifting the minimum wage—all things the National Party has opposed.

(Clark, 2007, p. 1)

The issue of tax rebates for donations to charity was raised by the National Party leader. This John Key saw was a way to alleviate school hunger through increasing likely donations to charities from businesses (Key, 2007a). The suggestion was labelled 'Tory Charity', by the Labour Party (Espiner, 2007), which had already promised to review tax in relation to charity as part of their coalition agreement with the United Future Party. Labour announced a new policy later that removed the tax cap on donations to registered charities (Barker, 2007).

The Leader of the ACT New Zealand Party saw the issue of hungry children in schools as unresolved:

The debate got sidetracked over how many kids are hungry, and whether private charity has any virtue over state provision - but let's accept that there are kids who are malnourished. What we haven't heard is what to do about it.

(Hide, 2007, p. 1)

The New Zealand Herald also posted readers' comments during the parliamentary debates. The majority of these blamed parents spending choices, laziness, selfishness, self indulgence, irresponsibility, and worthlessness. Also parents' smoking, alcohol and drugs consumption, gambling, youth, stupidity, and poor education were blamed for children going hungry. Children were also accused of lying about hunger, hiding healthy food so they could beg unhealthy food from friends, and for

spending their lunch money on junk food. Some readers suggested obese kids were proof that they had plenty to eat. One writer referred to supposedly starving children with cell phones who ate regularly at McDonalds, as proof against food insecurity. Some comments - in the minority - noted that children shouldn't be punished for their parents' faults and advocated feeding them as a priority. The few solutions offered by submitters included dairies (convenience stores) being banned from selling junk food, regulation of the food industry, educating inadequate parents, banning some people from having children, stopping benefits, basic ration cards, community garden projects, compulsory contraception, and setting up breakfast clubs in schools (The New Zealand Herald, 2007).

A New Zealand Herald article encapsulated the public/political debate on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2007:

Key (National Party leader) has attempted to carve out a role as the father of the nation, Labour is in full Kim Jong-Il rhetorical flight, denying that any of its citizens are starving, and righteous parents are adamant that hungry kids can jolly well starve and that will teach their useless parents.

(Kerre Woodham, 2007)

The argument that irresponsible parents are the main reason for child food insecurity does not account for poverty. In New Zealand poverty can be directly attributed to the actions of the state through the continuation of neo-liberal economic and social policies (Easton, 1995). Consequently, fundamental reasons outside their control contribute to the food insecurity their children experience (StJohn & McClelland, 2006; Wynd, 2005). Admittedly, "some parents do not always choose what is in the interests of their children" (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004, p. 239). This however should not negate the right of children to be fed.

Both major political parties, National in 1995 and Labour in 2007 avoided the issue of school hunger. While in government both contested claims that significant numbers of children were hungry and suggested their

respective social and economic policies were already effective. Paradoxically, in Opposition, each accused the other of failing to resolve the issue. Over this twelve year period little had changed in politics.

### ***Child Rights and Human Rights***

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) signed by New Zealand on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1979<sup>2</sup> confirms children's right to food:

Article1: The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.

(United Nations, 1966)

In 1996 New Zealand joined other countries in endorsing the World Food Summit resolution to halve world food insecurity by 2015 (World Food Summit, 1996).

In November 1989 the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCROC). New Zealand became a signatory in May 1993, joining 191 other countries. The Convention, although not binding, requires five yearly reports to the UN on progress toward the Articles. New Zealand has filed two reports; in January 1997 and October 2003. The UN subsequently responded with comments and recommendations on each report (Ludbrook, 2007).

After consideration of New Zealand's 1997 report, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about the fragmented approach and general lack of attention to UNCROC in any systematic way (United Nations, 1997). The government was urged to take direct responsibility for the delivery of core services that had been contracted out to non-government organisations (NGOs) through neo-liberal reforms; as many of these NGOs had been set up with Government's support and were mainly state funded while operating without any rigorous monitoring. Also within Government there was a



general lack of coordination on child rights issues and few available statistics or studies on the status of children (United Nations, 1997). By far the most telling criticism referred to article 4 of the convention<sup>3</sup>:

As regards the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, the Committee is concerned that the extensive economic reform process undertaken in New Zealand since the mid-1980s has affected the budgetary resources available for support services for children and their families and that all necessary measures to ensure the enjoyment by children of their economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum extent of the State's resources have not been undertaken.

(United Nations, 1997, p. 3)

The second United Nations response, to New Zealand's 2003 report, noted that the Human Rights Act 1993 had been reviewed without consideration of UNCROC. They also noted that no other legislation had changed in support of UNCROC. As was the case in 1997, lack of attention to article 4 was reiterated along with concerns about the effects of ongoing economic reforms on children:

The Committee is concerned that despite the persistence of poverty, the State party has not undertaken a comprehensive study of the impact of its economic reform policies on children, as previously recommended. The Committee is further concerned about the lack of available data on budgetary allocations for children.

(United Nations, 2003, p. 3)

And

The Committee is concerned that a significant proportion of children in the State live in poverty and that single-parent families headed by women, as well as Maori and Pacific Island families, are disproportionately affected.

(United Nations, 2003, p. 8)

Before 1999, under National-led governments, New Zealand effectively ignored UNCROC. Under successive Labour-led governments after 1999,

various departments did produce reports and strategies citing the Convention, but no attempt was made to review legislation (Ludbrook, 2007). Children under the age of 12 are mentioned as part of a broad range of strategies which are family focused. One such example is the Agenda for Children (Ministry of Social Development, 2002), another is The New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights (Human Rights Commission, 2005b). Children and youth over 12 years of age are also considered in terms of UNCROC, but almost exclusively in productivity and educational attainment related areas. While these and other government documents acknowledged child rights and UNCROC, no plan of action to address child hunger and food insecurity resulted. Plans and targets do exist for other areas of UNCROC, but these largely avoid the issues raised by the United Nations concerning article 4.

'The New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights' does however reveal Government responsibility for people's rights:

The Action Plan recognises that while government has specific responsibilities for the promotion and protection of human rights, responsibilities extend beyond the State to regional and local government, to the business and community sectors, to voluntary groups and organisations. Indeed, each of us has a responsibility to respect and protect the rights of others. This is crucial in the case of children, and of those adults who are dependent on others for their care and survival.

(Human Rights Commission, 2005b, p. 3)

Apart from legal protections covering neglect and abuse by parents and caregivers, other responsibilities for children are shared by everyone in society. It is important to realise what the rights of New Zealand children are in relation to being fed. In effect the Government takes no responsibility for this apparent neglect or abuse. Schools are not required to report children turning up hungry at school, nor are many parents prosecuted for being unable to provide food. Although the government can be linked to the cause of insufficient family resources, it takes little direct action to evaluate or assist schools to deal with the fallout. Consequently the legal right to food for these children falls into a gap

between the responsibilities of the State and society. By default the responsibility for feeding hungry children in schools rests with individuals and ultimately their compassion. Children therefore receive their right to food by chance and good will; or by luck rather than good management.

New Zealand's official approach to human rights has been described as fragile, and while having strengths it also has weaknesses:

New Zealand's approach to human rights generally has been pragmatic and practical rather than legalistic. Human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, are currently provided for largely through practice rather than through legislation. 'Human Rights in New Zealand Today / Ngā Tika Tangata O Te Motu', reflects on both the strengths and the weaknesses of this pragmatic approach, and noted the possible fragility of New Zealand's human rights protections in the absence of more comprehensive constitutional and legal provisions.

(Human Rights Commission, 2005b, p. 39)

In pragmatic terms New Zealand governments have not associated human rights with school food. In contrast the UK report to UNCROC in 2007 suggested that new universal and subsidised school meal programmes in Scotland were raising children's health and academic outcomes (HM Government, 2007). The USA also considers its range of food subsidies, such as food stamps, school breakfasts, school lunches and summer food programmes part of its commitment to the main goal of the 1996 World Food Summit - to halve world food insecurity by 2015 (Veneman, 2002). While New Zealand has also committed to the World Food Summit goals and is a signatory of UNCROC, little Government action has been taken which might feed hungry children in schools. In 1996, following the Public Health Commission report on widespread hunger in New Zealand schools, the government rejected the report while affirming its commitment to those who experience hunger on the international stage. In closing his address to the World Food Summit in Rome, the Honourable Lockwood Smith suggested:

If we fall short we betray those in the world who do not have access at all times to the food they need for an active and healthy life; we betray the vulnerable who suffer most from hunger.

(Smith, 1996, p. 1)

Things have however changed since 1996. Then it appears the government did not apply the terms poverty and hunger to the New Zealand population. In 2008, in a report on New Zealand's commitment to the World Food Summit Goals, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) showed that New Zealand had officially recognised small pockets of local hunger in the population due to limited access to food:

Although adequate levels of nutrition generally prevail in New Zealand there are small pockets of relative poverty and hunger due to issues of access rather than availability, which the Government attempts to alleviate through various social welfare programmes complemented by the activities of voluntary organisations such as food banks.

(Zwart, 2008, p. 3)

In terms of international obligations, this is one of the few references recognising poverty and food insecurity in New Zealand.

### ***Summary***

The expectation that future economic prosperity will eliminate temporary social casualties in New Zealand neglects the reality of what is now entrenched poverty. This expectation continued after 1999 when Third Way policies began to overlay neo-liberal reforms. In the new Third Way environment equal opportunity replaced the traditional social democratic principles the Labour Party had championed in the past.

Third Way governments see their role as a discretionary provider and enabler; intending to provide balance through coordination, targeted funding and stewardship. Strategies to build capacity and strengthen the

resilience of people in communities are also viewed as sound economic policy and an investment in citizenship through increased human capital. Under Third Way principles businesses were encouraged to form partnerships with state education institutions and agencies (PPPs). Education unions both locally and internationally opposed such alliances because they were seen to create inequalities and often come with 'strings attached'.

In 1995 the National-led government sidestepped the issue of hungry children in schools, as did the Labour-led government in 2007. Conversely neither party while in Government would let the issue undermine their credibility or social policy direction. As Labour-led governments presided over sustained economic growth in the 2000's little attention was paid to child poverty and school food insecurity. As a consequence New Zealand is poorly placed to face global recession in terms of social protections for the most vulnerable.

### **CHAPTER THREE: REDUCING INEQUALITY, RISK AND MEASUREMENT**

The previous chapter portrayed an ineffective response by the New Zealand Government to the plight of hungry children in schools. It also suggested that hungry children were only partially seen, while their parents and family incomes were the main foci of social policy. By and large political remarks about the problem of hungry children in schools played to voter attitudes which predominantly blamed parents. Advocacy amongst political representatives for state funded school food programmes was also small. Consequently the majority view of New Zealand Governments remained in tact in spite of mounting evidence of school hunger. This political resilience and apparent callousness warranted further investigation. This chapter therefore focuses on New Zealand Government attitudes, strategies and technologies in the social policy domain.

While dominant ideologies and public attitudes make up a clear political voice, a political dynamics can also be viewed as social relations involving authority or power (Foucault, 1972). Authority and power in terms of social outcomes is largely dependent on political decisions, and their interpretation by bureaucracy. Charities, schools and child advocacy groups have some influence, but in New Zealand they face a closed door of government. Discourses concerning hungry children in New Zealand schools are barely discernable in government social, health and education publications. Discourses which discuss hungry children directly are generally found in non-government domains. This is not the case in countries with state funded school food programmes. In countries such as the USA and UK there is an abundance of official and academic information. An absence of official discussion in New Zealand suggests a different way of thinking, which actively excludes the problem of hungry children in schools. A discussion of New Zealand social policy approaches may clarify how hungry children have benefited from social spending that did not feed them directly.

## ***The Treatment of Risk***

'The Treasury' discourses that inform social policy development and implementation in New Zealand are driven by economic imperatives and in some respects dominate social spending. Very few New Zealand treasury references could be found concerning child hunger in schools; however several key statements clarify The Treasury's position on poverty and reducing inequalities in society.

In 1999 The Treasury briefed the incoming government; recommending that care should be taken to distinguish between persistent and temporary disadvantage:

Social disadvantage is not solely attributable to low income. Statistically it can be associated with multiple factors such as income, ethnicity, health, disability, age, family status, gender, educational attainment, work experience,(and) region.

(The Treasury, 1999b, p. 45)

It should be noted that after the 1999 General Election, Government social spending to reduce social and economic inequalities increased significantly. However new social spending was inexorably linked to economic productivity. Getting adults into paid work to increase family incomes became a key policy objective. In this sense the social democratic tradition of the New Zealand Labour Party was superseded by enabling initiatives or what have been described as, 'A hand up and not a hand out approach' (Humphery, McDonald, Short, Peake, & Zappe, 2004). However the new Government was also intent on reducing the inequalities created while they had been in Opposition for the previous nine years.

The recommendations of The Treasury certainly appear to have informed the process to address social inequalities. This can be seen in 'Investing in Well-being: An Analytical Framework', which outlines how Government departments can increase the value of their expenditures that addresses disadvantage and inequality (Jacobsen et al., 2002). It offers an

empirically-rigorous way to evaluate child, youth and adult interventions across a range of social sectors and presents a close study of various social issues, including child risk factors:

No single risk factor or set of risk factors can predict negative well-being with certainty, particularly not at the individual level. (p. 9) [And] ... the evidence shows that a considerable part of the variation in child and adult outcomes cannot currently be explained in a secure causal sense.

(Jacobsen et al., 2002, p. 46)

Although poor child nutrition is mentioned as a learning readiness risk factor, it is grouped with multiple other factors that affect education outcomes. According to Jacobsen, (2002) the most significant risk affecting children's learning outcomes was teacher quality. Teacher quality subsequently became a key target of government strategies to address risk. Other factors like nutrition are treated as possible or uncertain risks that may cause harm if there are enough of them in a child's life:

Most children living in disadvantaged circumstances grow up to be well-functioning members of society. The fact that some children are resilient in the face of adversity has led to an interest in identifying the factors and processes that may protect children from outcomes.

(Jacobsen et al., 2002, p. 24)

The Treasury views expenditure on social programmes as an investment that should be weighed against known benefits over time (The Treasury, 2005a). Significant benefits gained over time exemplify investment that is effective. Government departments are encouraged to approach reducing inequality and disadvantage using a portfolio of strategies which can be adjusted at the edges after careful evaluation is done (Jacobsen et al., 2002; The Treasury, 1999a, 2002).



In the UK children's risk factors are considered in more holistic terms and many social protection initiatives are evaluated using qualitative methodologies which describe the experience of risk. 'The Children's Fund' is a key government mechanism which aims to reduce risk factors associated with poverty and disadvantage (Evans, Pinnock, Beirens, & Edwards, 2006). The resulting portfolio of measures include funded Breakfast Clubs; which aim to improve nutrition, attendance, school performance and parent involvement in children's learning. 'The Children's Fund' initiatives intend to build community capacity and human capital through addressing risk factors (A. Edwards, Barnes, Plewis, Morris, & al, 2006).

The Government's approach to child risk factors in New Zealand limits the range of preventative strategies available to departments. Other limitations arise from a reliance on second hand reporting from social service contractors, an emphasis on quantitative data, and outcome focused reporting. Even though qualitative data is recognised as important when identifying intangible benefits (The Treasury, 2005a) few qualitative studies have been initiated. Little is therefore known about the experience of child poverty. Instead poverty is officially related to household incomes. Accordingly the key goal of the Government to reduce inequalities focused on improving economic productivity:

The Government key goal for reducing inequalities is to reduce the inequalities that currently divide our society and offer a good future for all by better coordination of strategies across sectors and by supporting and strengthening the capacity of Māori and Pacific communities. It aims to ensure that all groups in society are able to participate fully and enjoy the benefits of improved productivity, [CAB Min (02) 25/1B].

(The Treasury, 2005b, p. 4)

While the Ministry of Social Development leads interagency cooperation as part of the Reducing Inequalities Officials Committee (Ministry of Social Development, 2005, p. 1), the Treasury's input into achieving this goal is significant. It regulates all reporting on the expected outcomes and

priorities of 'Reducing Inequalities'<sup>4</sup>, sets reporting standards, and produces reporting guidelines and requirements (The Treasury, 2005b). These requirements clearly emphasize the meaning of the key goal for reducing inequalities:

The key goal reflects fundamental principles relating to social justice - a desire to reduce disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity in order to achieve a similar distribution of outcomes between groups, and a more equitable distribution of overall outcomes within society.

(The Treasury, 2005b, p. 4)

As a discretionary provider the Government has targeted the major causes of disadvantage and social exclusion. However without actually measuring conditions experienced by children, how effective their policies have been at reducing poverty can only be relative to household economic data (St John, 2008).

New Zealand has avoided State funded school food programmes that are an integral part of UK and USA policies to address social and economic inequalities. These types of social protections recognise poverty as a lived experience. One recent example that highlights this different way of thinking about inequalities, is the annual report issued by the US Department of Agriculture on numbers of hungry children due to economic hardship (Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2008). New Zealand has shown little inclination to collect such information or highlight the existence of child poverty and food insecurity.

### ***Poverty: Attitudes and Measurement***

For New Zealand poverty is a relatively recent phenomenon. Post WW2, New Zealand enjoyed a relatively high standard of living and New Zealanders traditionally have associated poverty with Third World famine and refugee camps. More recently New Zealanders have become more aware of local poverty through media reporting, and official publications have noted local pockets of poverty and disadvantage. These are

seemingly small problems for a public more politically informed on the state of the national economy than the hardship of a maligned minority. Government departments have taken a cautious approach to poverty. Politically, hungry children challenge the effectiveness of existing Government spending to address inequalities, while any alternative solutions deviate from neo-liberal and Third Way self reliance approaches.

There is another underlying problem which relates as much to public service attitudes as it does to neo-liberalism. Under National Party-led government in the 1990's the word poverty was seldom seen in state publications. This has been attributed to a culture within Government with various elements:

Firstly, poverty was defined out of existence by certain government politicians and policy analysts, because there was no evidence of starvation as in many African and Asian countries. Secondly, when it was recognised, it was defined so minimalistically that only those most destitute were included. Thirdly, poor people were blamed for their unemployment and labelled 'dependent' by the state, despite the fact that substantial structural unemployment had been a part of the economy for over two decades. Fourthly, it was suggested that responsibility for the needs of poor families should lie much more with welfare organisations, the churches and philanthropists rather than the state. Finally, responsible research on the social impacts of the structural reforms was discouraged at best, and often blocked entirely by deliberate policy and under-funding.

(Waldegrave & Stephens, 2000, pp. 1-2)

Since this time the Labour Government has been proud of its economic and social policy achievements and its increases in social spending. However, questions have been raised about the way these achievements have been evaluated and reported. The New Zealand Salvation Army Social Policy And Parliamentary Unit, makes a very good case against Government measurement methodologies, claiming they don't measure social outcomes or what they claim to be measuring very well (Johnson, 2008). This raises the question whether social spending should have

been informed by peoples' experience of disadvantage, rather than household income data or outcome reporting restricted by Government priorities.

Given that an official recognition of child poverty in New Zealand only occurred in 2002, and that no timeline has been developed to eliminate it since, a reluctance exists to specifically eradicate it (St John, 2008). In 2001 the Minister of Social Development noted that no official measures of poverty or other recognised social indicators existed. He suggested that child poverty indicators were being worked on (Maharey, 2001).

Subsequently in 2007 the Ministry of Social Development reported that New Zealand did not have an official way to measure poverty (Perry, 2007, p. 47). When UNICEF compared child poverty levels in rich nations in 2007 it could not include New Zealand because insufficient information was available (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2007). Other reports have also noted the lack of data on child poverty in New Zealand (Crothers, 2000; Ludbrook, 2007; United Nations, 1997, 2003)

In 2005 the Human Rights Commission reported that one in three New Zealand children lived in relative poverty. This figure was based on household income data. The Commission went so far as to recommend an official poverty measurement system be developed, accompanied by set targets for the reduction of poverty which included monitoring of progress towards meeting targets (Human Rights Commission, 2005a).

A close look at the technical notes in MSD reports, confirms the arbitrary and relative nature of what is actually measured and questions the adequacy of the data sets relied upon (Baker, 1997; Ministry of Social Development, 2004a, 2004c, 2007f). In spite of error factors, the MSD is confident that the use of economic indicators is reliable enough to gauge poverty levels (Perry, 2007). In 2008, six-year old national nutrition data was still relied upon by the MSD (Ministry of Social Development, 2008; Parnell, Scragg, Wilson, Schaaf, & Fitzgerald, 2003), although new child health survey data has since been published (Ministry of Health, 2008). In a recent report by the MSD on pockets of hardship and poverty, the lack

of an official measure for poverty was dismissed for the reason that other poverty measures were contestable and most countries didn't have them (Ministry of Social Development, 2007e, p. 25).

The marked bureaucratic resistance to more comprehensive child poverty measurement methodologies may depend on the word poverty which carries with it “...an implication and moral imperative that something should be done about it.” (Piachaud, 1987, p. 161). Also poverty measured outside the parameters of economic disadvantage would take into account non-material dimensions which describe the poverty experienced by real people. Measuring levels of deprivation for these dimensions raises the question of diminished citizenship:

... lack of voice; disrespect, humiliation and assault on dignity and self-esteem; shame and stigma; powerlessness; denial of rights and diminished citizenship ... They stem from people in poverty's everyday interactions with the wider society and from the way they are talked about and treated by politicians, officials, the media and other influential bodies.

(Lister, 2004, p. 7).

The inability to participate in a society as active citizens raises human rights issues. New Zealand Labour-led governments have supported a practical and pragmatic approach to human rights, rather than legal protections and responsibilities. Bureaucratic attitudes in the 1990's saw poverty as an indictment against social and economic policies. Acknowledging poverty effectively threatened policy directions (Waldegrave & Stephens, 2000, p. 14). While Labour has attempted to address inequalities in their own way hungry children still appear at schools in large numbers. No government seeks to highlight social and economic policies which create, fail or tolerate disadvantage, unless they can be blamed on a previous administration. An unwillingness to acknowledge failure may be why official ways to measure child poverty haven't been pursued. However there is another reason. Apparently New Zealand politicians and public servants respond to quantitative, rather than qualitative, data:

... policy makers, the politicians in power and most of the public servants who served them,.....appeared wedded to the ideology of the day and quite immune to the stories of people's pain. We talked endlessly with policy analysts and researches in the public service in order to learn how to get them to take the issues seriously. We eventually found a way, and it is quite simple really. Policy analysts and researchers understand numbers. We needed to communicate with solid quantitative data.

(Waldegrave & Stephens, 2000, p. 2)

This argument appears contrary to The Treasury recommendations that qualitative data be used to support cost benefit analyses where quantitative measures do not reliably measure intangibles. If qualitative data is not collected then cost benefit analysis can't be done to mitigate a range of social risks (The Treasury, 2005a). This is because relative poverty measurement relies on economic data which may have little relation to the day to day lives of children. Just as concerning, is a tendency of Government to report on its own policy inputs and outputs. This effectively excludes concerns outside of policy priorities (Noll, 1997; Perry, 2005; UNICEF, 2005; UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2007).

Labour-led government in the 2000's suggested their economic and social policies were effective in reducing child poverty. The 2002 Agenda For Children focused on unemployment, youth transitioning into work, superannuation, and state house rents (Ministry of Social Development, 2002). There was also a focus on raising family living standards by subsidising the incomes of those families in low paying work. This policy was considered the biggest offensive on child poverty New Zealand had seen for decades (Ministry of Social Development, 2002). 'Working For Families' (WFF) was also described as the most effective instrument to alleviate child poverty available (Perry, 2004, p. 49). The success of WFF and other social policy initiatives saw the Prime Minister relay to Parliament that, "Solid progress is being made towards the goal of eliminating child poverty" (Clark, 2005, p. 1). Much as the WFF initiative increased the resources of poor working families, it can be argued that it

also discriminated against the non-working poor (St John & Wynd, 2008). This prompted legal action against the Government by the Child Poverty Action Group (Child Poverty Action Group, 2008).

The Third Way roots of these policies is not in question, nor is the intention to reduce economic disadvantage, however the same belief in neo-liberal social service restructuring, which exacerbated poverty levels in the 1990's, still dominated political thinking in New Zealand in 2008. Consequently initiatives with the potential risk of creating dependency appear to have no place in New Zealand.

If a country simply pursues economic efficiency at the cost of equality, it defeats the economic purpose, i.e. to provide a substantial quality of life for all its citizens. Inequality multiplies and the country will turn in on itself. Likewise, if a country pursues equality at the cost of economic efficiency, it will simply bankrupt itself and eventually increase the inequalities.

(Waldegrave, 1998, p. 7)

In terms of balanced social spending New Zealand governments have not recognised hungry children in schools as a State responsibility. The limit of Government responsibility lies with child protection powers exercised by various departments. Consequently Government ministries do not ask schools to report the number of hungry children who turn up at school each day. Nor is the impact of school food insecurity on learning a serious or specific official concern that requires direct intervention. Instead, information on school hunger is collected by individuals and organisations that have little contact, credibility or influence with Government ministries. Ironically official child health and nutrition data is available in abundance and much of this points to serious child food security problems (Turley & Tobias, 2003). Admittedly the Government has responded to child obesity and nutrition concerns with targeted initiatives, although these are largely educative.

## ***Measuring Hungry Children***

To establish that hungry children are a significant and national problem, the documented activities of local organisations, charities and schools suffice. In the absence of government intervention, these groups have responded by taking on a responsibility of care that is often beyond their capacity or sustainability.

Since the Government of the day rejected the Public Health Commission report in 1995 (Food and Nutrition Consultancy Service, 1995), at least two academic graduate studies have focused on hungry children in schools (Bloy, 2005; Gerritsen, 2005). Manukau City Council (MCC) has also highlighted school hunger in reports and briefing papers for committees and advisory groups, and documented interagency awareness of school hunger and wider child poverty issues (Doré, 2005, 2006; Moss, 2007; Te Ora o Manukau - Manukau the Healthy City, 2003, 2004a, 2004b). Other commentaries, including works by the Public Health Association and Child Poverty Action Group, recognise food insecure children turn up to school and warn of the risks this poses to learning readiness (Keating, 2004; Public Health Commission, 1995; Wynd, 2005).

Child health agencies and the media have also documented the quiet efforts of volunteers who alleviate the hardship of parents unable to provide food for their children. (Claridge, 2003; Keating, 2004; MacBrayne, 2000; The Press, 2002; Kim Woodham, 2002). In 2005, following the Child Poverty Action Group report on food bank use in New Zealand (Wynd, 2005), various newspapers reiterated calls for State funded breakfast programmes in primary schools (Davis, 2005; Saunders, 2005; Savage, 2005).

The question remains in New Zealand whether the Government has a direct responsibility to feed hungry children. UNICEF has raised concerns about child poverty in New Zealand and recommended the Government take direct action to protect the most vulnerable (United Nations, 2003). They also suggested that child poverty is a governmental responsibility because:



Variation in government policy appears to account for most of the variation in child poverty levels between OECD countries.

(UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2007, p. 9)

In 2007 New Zealand was in the bottom half of the OECD for the categories of economic standard of living, income inequality, market income per person and population with low income, while it lay in the upper quartile for numbers in paid employment (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). Social outcome reporting in 2004 shows similar comparisons. However, the low income figures were ranked lower in 2007 than 2004 (Ministry of Social Development, 2004b). These and other comparisons cast doubt on the effectiveness of policies to reduce inequalities and child poverty in New Zealand during a sustained period of economic growth.

### ***Summary***

Labour-led Governments, since 1999, have expressed a commitment to reducing child poverty. Their integrated economic and social policies were modelled on Third Way enabling principles which are also apparent in the UK. However New Zealand Labour inherited a bureaucracy committed to Human Capital Theory, Public Choice Theory and Transaction Cost Economics (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004).

The task of overseeing the Government's social policy implementation was also in the hands of a bureaucracy subject to Treasury audit requirements, and averse to creating dependency through handouts. Government departments were encouraged by the Treasury to approach 'Reducing Inequality' goals using a portfolio of strategies whose outcomes could be measured. Strategy portfolio's also appear to have been restrained or limited by reporting requirements, lack of risk assessment data and a focus on improving economic efficiency. Economic performance measures were unrealistically equated with improvements in social outcomes. It is reasonable to assume that while improving

household income data indicated poverty in decline, the Government convinced itself many of the social disadvantages for those in poverty were also diminishing.

Policy developers in New Zealand have not considered adopting the social protections that accompanied Third Way initiatives in the UK and USA - under Clinton's presidency. These built-in protections recognised poverty as a set of social risks experienced by families and children. A bureaucratic penchant in New Zealand for economic indicators and a resistance to qualitative methodologies also discounts non-material dimensions which describe the poverty experienced by real people. Failing to measure levels of deprivation increases the risk of diminished citizenship and people's ability to participate in society as active citizens.

No government seeks to highlight social and economic policies which create, fail or perpetuate disadvantage. Nor would a government be advantaged by lucid descriptions of the poverty experienced by its own country's children. It can be argued that political debate has assisted the ignorance of New Zealanders about poverty and hungry children. Whether this situation has been consciously engineered by ideological Government compromise or is simply avoidance of highlighting poverty is debatable. What is apparent however is a lack of care and concern for children who might be hungry in schools.

Labour-led Governments have claimed their economic and social policies have significantly reduced child poverty. It is evident however that a growing number of children come to school hungry. The Government intention to reduce economic disadvantage is clear, nevertheless neo-liberal economics which increased poverty levels in the 1990's is still dominant in New Zealand. Until the New Zealand Government takes responsibility for children's rights, school hunger may continue to only sometimes be alleviated by the limited resources of charity in some schools.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: SCHOOL FOOD, CHARITY AND THE STATE**

Previous chapters have emphasised that social policy does not always achieve what it sets out to do. Official adherence to social policy ideologies that perpetuate disadvantage can be described as dogmatic, especially when those supporting them claim they are working. Ultimately state social services should protect the most vulnerable. The existence of family food insecurity and school hunger, the proliferation of food banks, and charity food programmes in schools; challenge the adequacy of government approaches to child poverty.

Charity and poverty cannot be separated from the machinations of state. The proliferation of charity in New Zealand is a direct result of government social policy, and therefore a planned contingency. Arguably this partial solution of charity has allowed successive New Zealand Governments to marginalise the issue of hungry children. The devolution of services contracted to NGOs, and a growing reliance on the charity sector for basic services, has moved many issues, like hungry children in schools, further away from government responsibility.

Definite problems and gaps arise with this way of Government. In New Zealand there appears to be a lack of cross-agency cooperation which has led to poor feed back loops and different departments going their own way (State Services Commission, 2002). The effectiveness of bureaucratic leadership for cross agency cooperation has also been a major concern. Lack of accountability or clear mandates have also been issues. Poor transparency manifest in reporting and consultation, both internally and externally, also prevented priority links being made and has stifled public debate. Of serious concern is the suggestion that government Ministers were not considered informed or accountable enough to be effective (Guerin, 2003). Many of these performance factors indirectly affect the wellbeing of children.

Part of the solution to otherwise hungry children in the USA and UK, is state funded school food programmes. State funded school food is more socially democratic and less discriminatory, because it uses government funds and is subject to regulations. The presence of State funded programmes also changes the way people think about who is responsible for feeding hungry children in schools. This is partially due to the collective or inclusive responsibility engendered by spending public money. This commitment of State funds has not been without controversy in both the UK and USA. It can be argued that New Zealand has not only avoided the controversies of State funded school food, but avoided open public and political debate about an important issue like school hunger.

This chapter describes complex and competing elements surrounding the feeding of hungry children in schools from two perspectives. This comparative analysis more clearly exposes different ways of thinking about similar issues, depending on whether a State funds school meals or leaves this to charity. Issues related to food insecurity, breakfast skipping, charity in schools, and educative approaches to nutrition, are all put into a New Zealand perspective, then contrasted with a State funded approach. The issues, problems and merits of State food programmes in schools in the USA and UK are thus highlighted in terms of food quality, participation and research.

## ***A New Zealand Perspective***

At one (New Zealand) house there were no children. "They are all at school and they all have lunches," said the proud mother. "I hid some money when the 'rellies' (relatives) came so we could buy food on Monday." "Great, well done," said the lady. "What did you give them?" "Cheezles!" (low cost high fat and sugar snacks) said the mother proudly. "They have a one dollar packet each."

(St Giles' Family Learning Centre, 1999, p. 1)

### **FOOD INSECURITY**

In 2005 an analysis of New Zealand food bank use data showed that 100,000 households regularly did not have enough food. Food insecurity had become an increasing threat to children's development, especially their mental and physical health. Irregular meals combined with low cost high fat diets were contributing to rising incidences of child obesity, truancy, and poor concentration in schools (Wynd, 2005). The more recent rises in food prices and other commodities, coupled with a global financial crisis and recession, suggests many New Zealand families will be even less able to feed their children. The Government approach of educating food behaviours is little use if children don't have any/or quality food to choose from (Whitfield et al., 2007).

Official school guidelines expect New Zealand schools to encourage children to eat a healthy breakfast at home (Ministry of Education, 2007a). Research by the Consumers' Institute of New Zealand on the health value of breakfast cereals for sale, considered two thirds of them too high in fat, sugar and sodium, or too low in fibre. Only 63 of the 172 breakfast cereals available could be recommend as nutritionally appropriate (Consumers' Institute of New Zealand, 2006a). None of the 26 breakfast cereals being marketed solely to children could be recommended. Sugar levels over 33% were found in more than half the children's cereals tested and more than 50% in five cases (Consumers' Institute of New Zealand, 2006b).

Labelling was also a concern, with nearly all of the cereals surveyed making claims about added vitamins and minerals, suggesting they were indeed healthy. Breakfast bars and liquid breakfasts did not compare favourably to a sit-down breakfast of a bowl of recommended cereal, milk and fruit (Consumers' Institute of New Zealand, 2006a).

While education campaigns are an essential part of any public health strategy, some children can't access any type of breakfast at home, even an unhealthy one (Rush, 2007; Whitfield et al., 2007). What is also concerning is the lack of separation in New Zealand discourses between voluntary breakfast skipping and hunger due to poverty. Politicians have been criticised by child advocates and charities for this lack of separation (Oliver, 2008). Much of the education literature also assumes breakfast is accessible in all children's homes. Studies have noted that breakfast skipping is negatively influenced by several factors including poverty, parental academic qualifications and single parenthood (Miech et al., 2006; Siega-Riz, Popkin, & Carson, 1998). Breakfast skipping has even attracted the interest of researchers and regulators in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2007a; Quigley, Taylor, & Scragg, 2007).

One of the reasons for concern about breakfast skipping in New Zealand was the alarming figures released for the 2002 Children's Nutrition Survey (CNS). It showed that children aged 5-14 years self-reported having breakfast in the previous week only 86% of the time. Pacific Island and Maori children were 5.7 and 2.5 times more likely respectively to miss breakfast than New Zealand European and other ethnic groups (Parnell, Scragg, Wilson, Schaaf, & Fitzgerald, 2003). Using 2001 Census data for children 5-14 (New Zealand European 398,216, Maori 133,499 and Pacific 60,790) and figures from another study of 3,275 New Zealand children between 5-14, a figure of 83,248 children regularly missing breakfast was suggested (Utter, Scragg, Mhurchu, & Schaaf, 2007). Children's breakfast skipping also increased as they grew older. Girls were more likely to skip breakfast than boys because of body image concerns (Quigley, Taylor, & Scragg, 2007).

## CHARITY IN SCHOOLS

Research, in 2005, on Wellington City primary schools suggested that 50% of decile 1-4 schools were providing free breakfast and /or lunch to hungry children by the mid 1990's this figure had increased to 74% by 2005. In decile 1-4 schools 3% of children were believed to be hungry throughout the day. This increased to 6% for decile 1 and 2 schools (Gerritsen, 2005, p. 63). Free breakfast and/or lunch was organised on a school by school or teacher-by-teacher basis, and was mainly paid for from operations grants or teachers' pockets (Gerritsen, 2005).

In Manukau City, in 1992, the Healthy City Monitoring Group, a committee of Manukau City Council (MCC), responded to community concerns about hungry school children by surveying five local schools. The findings linked lack of concentration, increased absenteeism and slipping academic standards to poor nutrition and hunger. Funding from MCC and South Auckland Health made further study possible. The resulting three month pilot study confirmed that poor nutrition and child hunger were a real concern (Doré, 2006).

Consequently MCC funded a coordinator to set up a school food relief programme. The Resources to Schools Charitable Trust eventuated, and its food provisions to schools were supported by MCC, businesses and charities until 2004. The Community Development Committee of MCC reaffirmed Manukau City Councils commitment to the Food in Schools Project in 1999 (Manukau City Council Minute No. 68/99 in Doré, 2006). By October 2004, the Trust provided 3500 meals per day to 41 schools in Manukau (Doré, 2006). Two months later they decided to discontinue operations. The Trust reported a falling off of support from food sponsors while demand was increasing. The illness of the project coordinator was another mitigating factor. The Chairperson of the Trust undertook to continue operations until the end of the 2004 when operations ceased (Doré, 2006; Te Ora o Manukau - Manukau the Healthy City, 2004b).

The following year MCC was open to the idea of supporting another provider, but ruled out the direct provision of school food from council

funds. Council staff continued to monitor schools and in 2006 reported, to the MCC Child Advocacy Group, that 29 of the original Resources to School Trust sponsored schools were continuing to provide lunches to 500 students per day. These schools believed they were only feeding the hungriest children. Some local school principals had begun lobbying MCC and the media to raise awareness of child hunger in their schools (Doré, 2006). The demise of the Resources to Schools Trust left schools in Manukau without similar levels of support for two years. After having established a need for food assistance to schools the Trust programme proved unsustainable.

More than two years later, in 2006, the New Zealand Red Cross, after a successful trial in two primary schools in Manukau City employed a coordinator for their School Breakfast Programme. In 2007 it was made available to all decile 1 schools in New Zealand. Not all eligible schools have taken up the programme, however the number of participating schools has been increasing (New Zealand Red Cross, 2008). Another national provider, The Kids Can Charitable Trust, initiated a pre-packaged alternative to school breakfast and lunch programmes in 2006. In 2008 they claimed to be feeding 7500 children each week in member schools nation wide (Kids Can Charitable Trust, 2008).

Only the New Zealand Red Cross and Kids Can currently provide school food programmes nationally in 2008, however many other school and community initiatives feed children. Although there could be many multi-site initiatives regionally, only Angelsight was found in literature. They organise free breakfast clubs solely in Papakura and Takanini schools. Like many local school initiatives, their funding has been provided by local businesses and private donations. Angelsight is also supported by Papakura City Council and community groups (Bloy, 2005; Coulston-Grey, 2005). Other charity food programs and school initiatives have been reported by health providers, newspapers and the ERO (Batchelor, 1996; Claridge, 2003; Counties Manukau District Health Board, 2008; Education Review Office, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2007; MacBrayne, 2000; New Zealand Press Association, 1999a, 1999b; Norman, 2000; Savage, 2005;



Kim Woodham, 2002; Kerre Woodham, 2007) Apart from these snapshots of information much is unrecorded about the scope of school food programmes in New Zealand schools. Charities and individuals have reportedly responded to school hunger in some areas, while in others little information is available. While the extent of school food charity is widespread, nationally there is no definitive picture of operations.

The success of school food charity depends on charitable people and the attitudes in a school toward hungry children. Charities need resources either from donations of money, goods and/or services, however donating to charity, while always voluntary, may be motivated by commercial advantage for business sponsors more than philanthropy (Ball & Youdell, 2007). Businesses can be advantaged through brand advertising, product and image promotion. There may also be consumer capture and market positioning advantages (Stuart, 2005). Vested interests are not unique to New Zealand. It is their balance and degree of partiality which may affect social justice. Regardless of motivations, without generous people, many school food programmes could not operate.

Both Kids Can and New Zealand Red Cross have some corporate support for their programmes, but their individual approaches to school hunger are very different. The Red Cross attracted Progressive Enterprises Ltd (a major supermarket chain) as a sole sponsor of their breakfast programme (New Zealand Red Cross, 2007b). They have one programme and low profile sponsor branding compared to Kids Can, which is awash in sponsor logos and branded products. Kids Can also uses high profile events and celebrity patronage to put multiple educative and sponsor messages out to children and the public. They also have positioned themselves as a convenient alternative to other school programmes (Kids Can Charitable Trust, 2007).

Operational differences are also apparent. The Red Cross Breakfast Programme makes use of best practice examples in international literature and their organisations experience operating a similar program for 10 years in Australia (Australian Red Cross, 2007). They deliver a nutritious

breakfast to as many hungry children in each school as possible. Children are fed before school using a judgement free approach designed to minimise shame and maximise participation (New Zealand Red Cross, 2007a). The Red Cross, like many other local community and church initiatives, provides a basic breakfast of cereal, milk, and toast to any child who turns up before school. Volunteers and sometimes paid staff set up, supervise and clean up afterwards (New Zealand Red Cross, 2008). Kids Can, when setting up their programme decided to minimize barriers to school participation and provide pre-packaged branded food able to be discreetly handed out by school staff to those identified as hungry. Their programme avoids volunteers, food spaces and the logistics of fresh food supplies. Kids Can recipient schools confirmed the effectiveness of the programme, and food quality has been attested as nutritious (O'Brien, 2007).

Increasingly New Zealand schools seek funds from charities, gambling trusts, businesses, the public and others; to run additional education programmes, buy equipment and to keep the school going generally. They also actively contest pools of government funds, vying for the chance to implement educative programmes. There is little shame in receiving charity for these extra programmes or activities, but there may be for food.

Charity school food programmes may not be pursued by some schools because of the low status it would bring them or a possible backlash from parents. School shame or pragmatism is a real consideration, given the complex and competing notions that pervade schools. Consequently some schools may seek money or charity help for food programmes, while others with similar needs might not. Still others with hungry children may not qualify for, or have to wait for, charity support. The New Zealand Red Cross only support decile 1 schools, while Kids Can evaluates school applications and keeps a waiting list until more resources are available (Kids Can Charitable Trust, 2007).

The issue of shame is recognised by charities and some schools in their varying approaches and attitudes to free school food programmes. Both

the Red Cross and Kids Can claim to mitigate the effects of shame; the Red Cross through inclusive practises which encourage participation and Kids Can via teacher discretion. Shame is also understood differently depending on whether it is a schools, parents or children's.

#### EDUCATIVE APPROACHES

Instead of directly alleviating school food insecurity and poverty the energies of State in New Zealand are focused on underlying issues using mainly educative approaches. This limited portfolio of initiatives rarely includes funding school food. Fruit in schools is one exception. In both New Zealand and the UK, free fruit in schools is primarily an educative initiative, expected to change dietary behaviours rather than alleviate hunger. Free fruit and vegetables in the UK and free fruit in schools in New Zealand, is the Government's response to future proofing health outcomes by changing eating behaviours. The main cost benefit is a reduction in the cost of treating cancer and related illnesses cause by poor child and adult dietary habits (Department of Health, 2008; Maxwell, 2008; Ministry of Health, 2007).

Fruit in Schools (FIS) is the first State funded food programme, in New Zealand, since the Milk in Schools Scheme (MISS) ceased in 1967. It was trialled in Northland primary schools in 2005 before being launched nationally to clusters of decile 1 schools in 2006. One piece of fruit is provided each school day to all children in schools that sign up to the scheme. Participating schools must commit to become self-sufficient over a three year period, after which funding ceases. Consequently this money is freed up for a new cluster of schools or can be reallocated.

Educative approaches like FIS are designed to reach whole target populations, have finite costs, and should not create State dependency. They are also considered in terms of tangible cost recovery (cost benefits) over time (Jacobsen et al., 2002). New Zealand's main educative initiatives support healthy eating and action in schools. They include; Fruit In Schools (FIS) (Ministry of Health, 2007), Mission On (Ministry of

Education, 2007b), Health Promoting Schools (Auckland District Health Board & Mental Health Foundation, 2002), Project Energise (A. King, 2005) and aspects of the Lets Beat Diabetes campaign (Counties Manukau District Health Board, 2005). All have their counterparts in the UK and USA, but operate in an environment that does not necessarily have a free school food regime. It should be noted that Mission On does provide milk in some schools. Professional opinion of the educative effects of FIS and free milk in the Mission on schools is positive about the benefits of such programmes. Parents involved in them have reportedly become more aware of healthy eating generally. However the same commentators admit that changing attitudes and behaviours through these programmes takes time (Rush, 2007).

The New Zealand Government claimed in 2007 that their FIS programme raised student concentration and nutrition levels (Chadwick, 2007). The implication that one piece of fruit daily was the sole contributor to improved concentration and nutrition ignored the effects of free breakfast and lunch programmes which operated in many of the FIS clusters. Ironically these claims were based on teacher and principal observations. Teacher observations about large numbers of hungry children in schools were ignored in the past by successive New Zealand Government's. This suggests that professional observations are only credible when they support government initiatives.

Another parallel with international trends is the regulation of food in schools. New Zealand official regulations and guidelines do not mention free school food programmes, their best practice or food quality (Ministry of Education, 2007a, 2007c). In this way the guideline and regulations, by default, assume that all families can afford to feed children healthy food, send food to school, or provide children with money to buy it (Ministry of Education, 2007a; The New Zealand Herald, 2007). As discussed many families in New Zealand lack the option to buy quality food or can't even afford sufficient cheap, high fat and sugar foods. In some cases household food supplies run out before money is available again (The Public Health Advisory Committee, 2004; Wynd, 2005).

## SCHOOL REALITIES

Outside of their main role of curriculum delivery, schools in New Zealand are poorly equipped to deal with the complex and often contradictory social circumstances experienced by their students, particularly in low decile schools. The point of demarcation between support for learning and social service is often dependent on school resources, staff attitudes and experience (Thew, 2001; Wylie, 2007b). As a result many hungry children depend on kind hearts and chance circumstances within any school or wider community.

New Zealand schools are not designed with providing hot meals in mind either. In many cases they lack the facilities to feed hot food to large numbers of students, although some schools are better equipped than others. In larger schools food can usually be purchased in tuck shops or cafeteria, and it is only the sale of food that the new regulations and guidelines target. These official documents do not mention food given away free, although schools are expected to promote healthy eating and encourage children to eat a healthy breakfast before school (Ministry of Education, 2007a, 2007c). This regulatory discussion may become moot if the new Nation Party led Government review the changes to the National Administration Guidelines to schools as promised in their election campaign (Kirk-Anderson, 2008).

New Zealand schools are unique internationally, because of their isolated status as individual crown entities. Schools shifted from socially contracted institutions to legally contracted organisations in the late 1980's. These changes represent a move from direct State governance to indirect control through lay governance structures, funding mechanisms and regulation (Picot, 1988; Robinson, Ward, & Timperley, 2003). In dealing with an issue like hungry children, this autonomy of schools leaves hungry children vulnerable to individual and collective attitudes. Isolation also allows New Zealand governments to distance themselves from some school issues when they choose. Consequently poorly equipped and uninformed schools face a raft of otherwise state responsibilities.

In defence of the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development, additional funding and support services to low decile schools are available. These however seldom meet or balance social inequalities in areas of high relative poverty (Thrupp, 2007; Wylie, 2007a). Low decile schools require more connection and support from Government to meet the needs of children. Lay Boards of Trustees are often poorly equipped to make informed choices because they generally lack a national or global perspective on education and community issues (Wylie, 2007b). School principals in low decile schools may also dominate decisions while Boards are attempting to understand their governance roles (Fancy, 2004). These school leaders, in the absence of clear official mandates or directives, must rely on their own social and moral judgments (Thew, 2001). Whether the core values of communities are reflected or shared by those on school Boards or Staff is uncertain (Johnston, Cheyne, & Parker, 2005). Effective schools do consult and involve parents, to strengthen the learning outcomes of children. Some schools develop good relations of trust, while others don't (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; Jacobsen et al., 2002). Ultimately schools end up deciding, in their own way, whether to feed hungry children.

The idea of communities helping themselves is a key principle of neo-liberal and Third Way social policy. However communities and schools which experience food insecurity, suffer under multiple other risk factors which limit their ability to respond. Those most in need of support often feel disconnected and may not participate in community actions like school food programmes. This may mean a lack of volunteers, negative attitudes from some and shame for those who are food-insecure.

## ***State Funded School Food***

### **FOOD QUALITY**

Worldwide, the quality of food provided by schools has come under scrutiny in recent years. Moves to improve school lunch and breakfast standards were introduced in the USA in 1996 (Joanne, 1996). These are regularly reviewed and also attract implementation audits from State nutrition agencies (Garnett, 2004). Removing junk food and fried food from school menus and vending machines has also been a priority (Barnes, 2004; Cowan, 2005; Zhang, 2007). Recent publicity in the UK brought the issue of school food quality to a head. Poor quality meals had resulted from the removal of school food standards and the compulsory tendering out to the private sector of food services in 1980 (Williams, 2005).

The government has been under pressure to find ways to ensure that healthier school meals are available - a task made more difficult by the wide range of private and public sector catering providers. [and] "No child should be bamboozled into eating a diet which harms them. Standards for school food should be the best we can do, not the most we can get away with," said Ms Leather, a former deputy chair of the Food Standards Agency.

(BBC News, 2005, p. 1).

In 2006 food standards were reintroduced in the UK following recommendations from the School Meals Review Panel (School Meals Review Panel, 2005). They also recommended the establishment of the School Food Trust. The new Trust, set up with £15 million by the Education Department (BBC News, 2005), now oversees the implementation of new food standards in schools. Schools are also subject to Ofsted audits of these standards implementation.

## PARTICIPATION

Of real concern to the UK Government and food industry, has been the drop from 50% to 40% student uptake of school meals after improvements in quality. Some school catering associations believe that parent packed lunches or street bought food is damaging children's health (Cassidy, 2006). Other research has recommended a review of the quality of home-brought lunches (Colquhoun, Wright, Pike, & Gatenby, 2008). According to media sources in the UK, the decline in school meal participation is due to several factors; it seems children would prefer high sugar and fat content foods, as opposed to the new healthier choices on offer in school canteens. Also the menus brought about by new food standards cost more for the children who are required to pay (Haymarket Publications, 2007; Liverpool Daily Post, 2007).

Since its inception in 2006 the UK's School Food Trust has launched a marketing and education campaign to encourage parents and children to opt back into school meals. They have also advocated locking school gates so children are denied access to street food (Hickman, 2007). Recently the Trust chairperson took the Government to task for building smaller inadequate kitchen and dining spaces in new schools (Henry, 2007).

Also in the UK, initiatives such as The Food For Life Partnership, which is led by the Soil Association, aims to promote healthy eating of local and organically grown produce through £17 million in grants to schools (The Journal, 2007). In a move to increase participation rates the Government has also begun making more school lunches free. They have also invited parents to school meal tasting sessions (Children Now, 2007; The New Zealand Herald, 2006). Across the UK schools and parents largely support the menu changes, but the drop off in interest from children is still alarming school catering services (Leicester Mercury, 2006).

Public pressure has also preceded the introduction of universal free school meals in Scotland, and Hull in England (Dickie, 2008). For many parents excluding children from free food is discriminatory. Research on multiple



trials in both Scotland and England attest to improvements in student attendance, concentration and behaviour (Colquhoun, Wright, Pike, & Gatenby, 2008; The Scottish Government, 2008). Shame was also eliminated because factors identifying children as different or poor had been removed. Initiatives like these move the UK Government closer to universal provisions of school food nationally. The changes can be attributed to a growing public awareness of the State's responsibility to alleviate poverty and the benefits for all children of free healthy meals in schools (Green, 2008).

In the USA student participation in subsidised or free school meal programmes are known to be higher for ethnic minority children, than in white children attending the same school. Participation rates are also higher in schools where more children qualify for subsidised or free meals. Parental education and their consequent ability to access and understand school food entitlements is also a factor (Sampson, Meyers, Rogers, & Weitzman, 1991). Many school authorities in the USA, which are eligible for food subsidies, don't take up their school breakfast entitlements. After more than 30 years of breakfast funding being available it was estimated in 2007 that only 9.9 million children ate free or subsidised breakfast as opposed to 30 million who ate lunches (Food Research and Action Centre, 2007). School reluctance to set up breakfast programmes has been attributed to bus timetables, additional school costs, the relatively low number of eligible students, and a persistent attitude that feeding breakfast should be the responsibility of parents (P. King, 1998).

The most improved student participation levels in the USA, School Breakfast Program (SBP), were observed when breakfast was made available during traditional lesson times in classrooms. Teachers found breakfast relatively easy to administer and noted behaviour and concentration improvements. This practice avoided the stigmatisation issues surrounding large cafeterias and food vouchers (Pilant, 2006). Other studies also suggest that making breakfast programmes free to all students would increase participation:

...offering universal-free school breakfast to all students, regardless of household income, may result in more children consuming a nutritious breakfast and beginning the school day ready to learn.

(McLaughlin, Bernstein, Crepinsek, & Daft, 2004, p. 3)

In both the USA and UK some school authorities with lower percentages of qualifying students opt out or never opt into subsidised food programmes. Operational or organisational obstacles, like funding regulations and red tape can adversely affect some schools decisions to set up and maintaining subsidised school food services. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides a bulk funding option for schools who offer free meal to all students. This is designed to cut down administration costs, although it is more attractive for schools with high numbers of eligible students (Food Research and Action Centre, 2007).

#### THE FOCUS OF RESEARCH

Because they receive Government funds, school meals in the UK and USA are more publicly accountable than charity programmes in New Zealand. In the UK and USA programmes attract the scrutiny of nutritionists, educationalists, voters and politicians. In New Zealand charity school food programmes receive little attention from Government research. New Zealand nutritionists also reason in favour of existing educative strategies to address eating behaviours, rather than school food programmes (Quigley, 2007).

Generally research in the USA and UK supports feeding otherwise hungry children in schools. Also government publications show links between State food programmes and their benefits, such as academic performance (HM Government, 2007; United States Department of Agriculture, 2007). In contrast New Zealand Government officials were accused by researchers in 2000 of deliberately ignoring or failing to fund poverty investigations (Waldegrave & Stephens, 2000). Admittedly there has been more work on child food security and nutrition since 1999, including an

interest in dietary problems, student learning and the importance of breakfast for learning (Quigley, 2007; Quigley, Taylor, & Scragg, 2007).

International research in recent years has shifted focus from school lunch programmes to school breakfast programmes, a more recent addition to many State funded school food programmes. Studies have examined the most effective breakfast foods for learning and nutrition in such programmes (Mahoney, Taylor, Kanarek, & Samuel, 2005). Most studies also confirm increases in academic performance and improvements in the nutritional status of at risk children (Flax, 1988; Hershenson, 1992; Kleinmana et al., 2002; Murphy & Pagano, 1998; Shemilt et al., 2004; Wahlstrom & Begalle, 1999). Improvements have also been noted by teachers and parents in motivation, discipline and concentration; for students who regularly attended free breakfast programmes (Hyndman, 2000; Meyers, Sampson, Weitzman, Rodgers, & Kayne, 1989; Wahlstrom & Begalle, 1999). Other studies confirm that providing free school food encourages student attendance, especially in food-insecure communities (Enrique, Santiago, & Ernesto, 1998; Meyers, Sampson, Weitzman, Rodgers, & Kayne, 1989).

In both the UK and USA, free breakfast clubs are a relatively recent addition to traditional midday school meal programmes. This is not to discount lunch programmes, where learning readiness and nutrition benefits are well researched and accepted (Grantham-McGregor & Olney, 2006; Meyers, Sampson, Weitzman, Rodgers, & Kayne, 1989). The UK has also seen a marked increase in breakfast clubs in recent years, because of Government initiatives like 'the Childrens fund' (Evans, Pinnock, Beirens, & Edwards, 2006) and State support of free school meals in all Scottish schools (The Scottish Government, 2008). Extensive studies have confirmed the effectiveness of Scotland's initiatives, in improving pupil performance and nutrition status (Shemilt et al., 2004; Shemilt, Mugford, Moffatt, Harvey, & et al., 2004). Pilot project evaluations are also providing mounting evidence to support universal school breakfast provisions across the UK, especially for younger children

(Colquhoun, Wright, Pike, & Gatenby, 2008; Land, 2008; MacLardie, Martin, Murray, & Sewel, 2008; Samuels, 2007).

#### POLITICAL SUPPORT

In 1994 the Republican Party in the USA vowed to cut school breakfast budgets, while the Democratic Party looked to increasing them (Estrich, 1994). The year before, some qualifying schools had refused to offer breakfast programmes and were ordered by the Courts to do so (New York Times, 1993). In 2001 the New York Times reported that persistent low incomes meant many working families could not afford basic food supplies (Rothstein, 2001). For many people in the USA a combination of free and subsidised school lunch and breakfast programmes, combined with charity food banks has been, and still is, essential in keeping up family health and national academic test scores (Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2008; Rimer, 1995).

The USA and UK have a history of subsidised school food services being contracted out to the private sector, followed by the maximisation of contractor profits at the expense of quality. Deregulation has not benefited children and has inevitably led to low quality meals:

The state of many school meals is an indictment of more than two decades of (UK) public policy which has in effect stripped nutrients off plates, removed skills from kitchen staff and seen the take-up of school meals drop precipitously. [and] Not since the creation of the welfare state has there been such a groundswell of public support for improvement of school meals.

(School Meals Review Panel, 2005, p. 59)

The State provision of school food in the UK and USA, has survived the rise in neo-liberalism and Third Way. In these countries there is no political mandate to give up what is considered an essential public good. Some comparisons can be drawn between New Zealand in 2007 and the UK and USA in the early to mid twentieth century (Atkins, 2005b; Gunderson, 1971). Post WW2, these countries moved from inadequate

charity provisions, to State funded food relief. Although these new country-wide initiatives were in support of an effective work and fighting force, they were also recognition of Government's responsibility. In the UK, some within the Treasury opposed State funding of school meals and milk because of dependency and cost concerns (Atkins, 2005a).

New Zealand has the opportunity to avoid partial funding regimes and the mistakes made by other nations which pioneered school meals. This country could also take advantage of the international research into universal food programmes and move to implement such programmes in New Zealand. Children do not have to suffer the slow shifts in vested public, private and commercial interests that occurred in countries, like the USA and UK, over more than a century. Once established these programmes and provisions become popular and sustainable, because their benefits are understood by a majority. The opportunity exists, if the political leadership of New Zealand were to put the wellbeing of children and society first.

### ***Summary***

Hungry children arrive at school in New Zealand without breakfast each day. Many are also hungry throughout the day. No direct responsibility for feeding them is taken by the Government, and as a consequence the problem is subject to local practical and pragmatic solutions. Some charity is available to schools, through the generosity of individuals, charity organisations and businesses. However each school must decide independently what to do or whether to see a problem.

The absence of Government intervention is engineered by clear lines of demarcation. Officially hungry children are not a priority and are left to charities, communities and schools. Official monitoring has been cursory and inconclusive. When it is acknowledged officially food insecurity in New Zealand schools is treated as a symptom of other more pressing concerns for Government. Consequently school hunger is temporary, because it is dependent on the success of productivity-focused social

policy. The issue of breakfast skipping has however received some attention as it affects relatively large numbers of children.

Since teacher estimates of hungry children in schools were reported and rejected by the Government in 1995, no officially funded research or reports specific to the issue of hungry children in schools have been publicly available. The few academic and local authority estimates available suggest around 6% of children in the lower 20% of schools are hungry throughout the day. Figures could be much higher, as shame and silence may have produced skewed results. While studies cannot show how many children are hungry they point to a growing problem, in a school system never designed to deal with it.

Nationally only Kids Can and Red Cross New Zealand run charity food programmes, although there are many individual school centred local initiatives. Each charity effort approaches the issues faced by schools and hungry children differently. A complex range of notions and tensions also surround school food programmes. The least of these may be the balance of parent and school attitudes to hungry children. In most respects this complex dynamic exists because of the way schools are structured and governed, and the absence of State responsibility.

Internationally, State funded school food programmes mitigate the food-insecurity brought on by poverty. They act as a hardship buffer through economic cycles and improve the health and educational outcomes of future work forces. When governments fund the feeding of children, the issues are openly discussed, measured and researched. When governments abdicate responsibility to charity the issues remain largely hidden. In countries where State funded school food programmes are available they are considered an impartial human right. They are also an admission of State responsibility.

Each country has a unique set of assumptions about the role and balance of State intervention. History also has a huge influence. In New Zealand many of these assumptions depended on a Third Way approach to social

and economic policy, and a legacy of neo-liberal reform. Rights, in a practical and pragmatic sense, also characterise New Zealand political dynamics. The USA and the UK also have a recent history of Third Way and neo-liberal government approaches, but again it is the balance of key assumptions and history which separate them from New Zealand for this issue. The USA and UK share a modern history of providing State funded school meals, while New Zealand avoided post WW2 entrenchment of such school meals.

New Zealand health and education literature, that mentions poverty and food hardship, seldom mentions free school food. Also nutrition literature emphasises and supports an educative rather than an interventionist approach to issues like breakfast skipping and food choices.

Contradictory international studies about academic performance, low student participation rates in school food programmes, and the dubious quality of school meals are all used to discount the effectiveness of state funded school meals. In contrast the USA and UK publish multiple studies which support the links between food programmes, academic achievement and wellbeing. State subsidised and free food is an established right and State responsibility in these countries.

New Zealand has yet to count the cost of hunger in schools. The arguments and information in previous chapters suggests up to 20% of New Zealand children in low decile schools may be limited in their achievement at school by food-insecurity. This does not include the children who eat food which damages their health and future wellbeing. While New Zealand has officially attempted to address underlying issues through minimal regulation, advice and educative campaigns, little effort has been made to feed hungry children beyond emergency interventions and allowing the discriminative lottery of charity to continue.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS**

In total nine people were interviewed. They were selected from three groups, primary school principals; one senior official from each of the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Development; and senior managers and/or founders of charities which feed children in schools. All of the prospective candidates were telephoned and given a brief description of the project then sent an introductory letter outlining the research project.

All candidates, due to their employment status or organisational positions, were expected to possess an informed view about the issue of hungry children in schools. Two of the primary school principals headed decile 1 schools, while the third came from a school with a decile 3 ranking (In future referred to as Principal A, B or C respectively). One senior official from each of the Ministries chosen were available for interview (In future referred to as the participants (or similar) from Ministry A, B or C). Two officials were based in Wellington and another in Auckland. The three charities selected delivered free food programmes in multiple schools. Two of them offered programmes nationally. (In future referred to as the participants from Charity A, B or C).

The semi-structured interviews asked two questions. The first was designed to explore the problem of hungry children in schools. The second question looked for a way forward in the long term.



### ***Question One***

Do you think the issue of feeding hungry children in New Zealand schools is an important problem?

#### **OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES**

All the interviewees agreed that hungry children in schools are an important problem. The government officials placed the issue amidst multiple social concerns facing some groups and communities and more an issue for the whole of society than just the Government. None of these officials advocated feeding children in schools as a priority action. Rather school hunger was a secondary issue that indirect actions targeting a broad range of issues would probably mitigate. They expressed reservations about free school food programmes, questioning their appropriateness and/or sustainability. All admitted that there appeared to be children who were hungry at school, but felt a lack of detailed evidence about the issue meant size and degree were not certain.

The charities believed that large numbers of hungry children turned up at low decile New Zealand schools every day. The participants from Charities A and C noted research their organisations had undertaken before setting up their food programmes. For all the charity participants, leaving children unfed was unacceptable. Charity participants also believed that their programmes were feeding the neediest children while many still went unfed.

Principals A and B (from decile 1 schools) experienced student hunger on a daily basis. Both of their schools had engaged with the issue by setting up breakfast and lunch programmes which were now largely supported by charities. They also felt the problem of hunger had worsened in more recent years. Their food programmes addressed underlying or contributing social, education and dietary issues within the resources available to them. Principal C's decile 3 school did not have a regular or high number of children turning up hungry, nor did he mention the need for his school to run free breakfast and lunch initiatives. However, when

individual hungry children were identified the school did not hesitate to feed them, follow up with families, and in persistent cases contact social services.

Feeding children who were hungry was the first priority for all of the principals and charity participants interviewed. The principals admitted that many schools with hunger needs viewed the issue differently and did not provide food. The charity participants also understood that some schools would not take up their free food programmes. The participant from Charity A reported a large number of schools on their waiting list.

#### MINISTRY OFFICIAL'S VIEWS

All three Ministry officials expressed concern for children who were unable to reach their potential. Their individual concerns for children included factors such as children buying unhealthy choices, seeing themselves as cared less about than some of their peers, long term health effects such as malnutrition, and poor learning participation. The participant from Ministry B suggested one risk was that children could find food elsewhere and from people who they should not be associating with. All of the Ministry participants suggested that hungry children in schools was not an evidenced risk at this time and that incidences of apparent school hunger were an indicator of a much bigger picture.

The Ministry participants agreed that the risk to society was a generation of children who could not contribute to society as effectively because they had not reached their potential due to poor diet or malnutrition. They all recognised potential costs to society in health care and other social outcomes in the future.

I guess the risk to society is that it is a social issue that we could possibly ignore or overlook. Children are obviously our future.

(Participant from Ministry B)

The Ministry participants also agreed that insufficient evidence was available to say what the size of the problem was. The participant from

Ministry A believed the size of the school hunger problem had been exaggerated by particular groups and the media:

Between 85 -95% of children are going to school with breakfast. Now that's not saying they are going to school with the correct nutritionally balanced breakfast that we would necessarily like. I think the percentage of children that are going to school without breakfast of any sort is quite low, but then of course 10%, that's still one in ten, and if it's more than that perhaps two in ten.  
(Participant from Ministry A)

The participant from Ministry B suggested that the work she had been involved in around the size of the problem in Auckland was unable to measure the numbers of hungry children. This was partly because hunger was not the sole reason children accessed school breakfast clubs:

These children choose to adopt the food at school because its simply better than the food they get at home; or its different to the food they get at home; they don't get the opportunity to eat that sort of food at home; but its not any better than the food they have originally been offered

(Participant from Ministry B).

The participant from Ministry C suggested their department did not have a full understanding of the size of the problem either. She did have sufficient information from various pieces of work around child nutrition to know the problem seemed to be growing.

The participant from Ministry A felt children were entitled to a healthy diet at home and the range of sustaining elements they needed. Older students should also be able to buy healthy food at school. The participant from Ministry B assumed children had the right under law to shelter and the provisions of life, including food. She knew of people being prosecuted who did not meet those rights. The participant from Ministry C suggested children had the right to shelter, good food and an appropriate diet, but who you hold accountable for that is highly debatable. She also suggested that the roles and responsibilities of parents,

communities and government were undefined and varied through a child's life.

The Ministry interviewees agreed that certain school responsibilities were apparent, and there needed to be closer cooperation on the problem between central government agencies and with schools. The participant from Ministry A saw the problem of hungry children in schools in the context of the changes to the National Administration Guidelines, because they addressed food sold in schools and provided healthy eating education guidelines. She also suggested that the schools involved in the Fruit In Schools scheme and Health Promoting Schools were:

...well aware of the link between diet and student learning and concentration and had taken that on as a moral responsibility well before the government indicated that there was going to be a formal regulation change.

(Participant from Ministry A)

The participant from Ministry B did not agree or disagree with children being fed by their school, but felt schools had a responsibility to connect children who appeared hungry with the appropriate government agency or service provision so they could be fed and their wider issues addressed:

So I think at the very least it's the school's responsibility to acknowledge that there seems to be a problem or to at least get some agencies to investigate whether there is a bigger problem with the family. Whether the child is coming to school hungry is indicative of some other support that they need.

(Participant from Ministry B)

The participant from Ministry C suggested schools had a responsibility to provide healthy food on their premises and had an obligation to work with available agencies. While feeding children was not the primary responsibility of schools they did have a responsibility to work with others to ensure hungry children were fed. The Ministry officials generally agreed that the State's responsibility appeared to be partial and depended

on a planned regulated and evidentially informed approach. Much of what they saw their respective departments already doing was reflected in answers:

The State has some responsibility, but I think hungry children are a society problem. I think it's a reflection of the underlying determinants of health and they're affected by a range of different factors and the State has some of the controls or can put in place some of the controls, but I think it's a problem for the whole society and I don't think just putting it at the State's door is actually going to get change to happen.

(Participant from Ministry C)

The participant from Ministry A believed the State was taking some responsibility, but agreed with the participant from Ministry C that hungry children in schools were ultimately an issue for the whole of society. The participant from Ministry B felt the State had agencies that could respond adequately to reported cases of school hunger. She believed these agencies had the capacity to deal with feeding children while responding to the wider social issues. The important thing was a planned coordinated response rather than the ad hoc nature of existing school food programmes in a limited number of schools:

Obviously if there is a problem I suggest somebody needs to be providing food, but it needs to be well thought out. You'll be aware of all the different breakfast in schools programmes that have been provided by various different agencies. The State's been involved, NGOs have been involved and because of its ad hoc nature I think it's not a well planned thing.

(Participant from Ministry B)

The Ministry participants agreed that parents with the wherewithal to feed their children carry that responsibility. The participant from Ministry A also suggested that parents were at the centre of the issue. Parents needed to be the bearers of good food messages and set an example. The participant from Ministry B believed parents were responsible for providing the necessities of life and therefore had the responsibility to feed their

children. The participant from Ministry C suggested addressing underlying social issues could eventually mean the problem went away:

I think it needs to be put in that wider context and if we can do something about some of the underlying determinants then some of the problems around hungry children would probably begin to go away. If we only address the immediate problem we are probably only putting a Band-Aid on it.

(Participant from Ministry C)

#### CHARITY VIEWS

The charity participants all suggested that hungry children don't learn, are disruptive, are often truant and can bully others for food. They reported dramatic improvements in these behaviours when children were fed. All of the charity participants believed they were only dealing with the most extreme hunger needs in schools, and claimed collectively that their charities fed thousands of children daily throughout New Zealand. However, the charity interviewees felt that many more children in need of help went hungry from lack of resources, school non-participation, shame issues and family factors. Poor long term health outcomes, learning difficulties and other costs to society were also apparent to all. The problems facing the families of hungry children were a current reality and were described by charity participants in a context of a society already at risk:

Some children have not had dinner the night before, or they've had a packet of those 2 minute noodles dry, or that's what they've got for their lunch, or they've got no lunch, or it's even worse than that in some cases. It's just the life style that some of these children come from.

(Participant from Charity B)

While discussing factors such as gambling, drinking, violence, shift work, broken families and children on the streets, as contributors to family breakdown; the charity interviewees agreed that not feeding hungry children effectively punished them for their circumstances and their

hunger. Feeding children showed them that someone cared, and contributed to breaking cycles of neglect and poverty.

All of the charities believed that children have a basic human right to adequate food, nutrition, clothing, and housing. They all believed large numbers of hungry children existed, especially in low decile schools. These children were helpless and warranted protection. All of the charity participants indicated that their first priority was to provide the bare essentials that couldn't wait on longer term solutions.

The participant from Charity A felt the issue of school hunger was being ignored in breach of children's rights:

We are talking about kids whose level of deprivation is significant. If they didn't have our support they would be filling their stomachs from the school water fountain. So I believe it's a breach of their basic human right to health and wellbeing.

(Participant from Charity A)

The Charity A participant also suggested the school lunch programmes operating in other countries were a response to poverty and that New Zealand's poor response to hungry children was unacceptable. She felt people were ignoring the immediate needs of children in New Zealand and the Government needed to partner with their charity to meet that immediate need while the longer term social issues were dealt with. The participant from Charity B knew that countries like Sweden and England had free or subsidised school food provided by the State. She argued that everyone in those countries would accept that it was a normal school activity to provide food and suggested New Zealanders needed to get over blaming parents and turn their thinking around.

The Charity C participant knew that many countries such as Australia and the USA ran free school breakfast clubs in low socio-economic areas. Their charity's school breakfast programmes had initially not been taken up by all schools that needed to feed children. Only a few South Island

decile 1 schools had taken up their programme, while the highest participation had come from decile 1 high Maori population schools across New Zealand. They knew the problem was not just a South Auckland problem, although the participation of South Auckland schools was high.

The participant from Charity A believed the parents of hungry children did not have the money to feed them and did not deliberately choose not to feed them. The participant from Charity B agreed that life was hard for the parents of hungry children. Although feeding children was a parent's responsibility, other factors like drinking, drugs and poor parenting skills meant many parents were not in a position to feed their children adequately. She suggested things needed to happen now for these families, and feeding children at school made a positive difference. The participant from Charity C had strong views on parenting, but was adamant their charity were not prepared to ignore starving children:

If they want to have kids then they have got to feed them, clothe them and keep them warm. That's the number one priority. That's why you have kids supposedly, to nurture them, and if they're not doing that then there is an issue. That's where it all comes back to; parents are number one.

(Participant from Charity C)

## PRINCIPALS' VIEWS

The principal participants all had first hand experience of hungry children turning up at their schools. Principals A and B (from decile 1 schools) saw child hunger on a daily basis. Both their schools had initiated breakfast and lunch programmes that were largely supported by charity. Both principals had also introduced learning strategies to address underlying social, education and dietary issues. Principal C's decile 3 school did not have a regular or high number of children turning up hungry, nor did he mention the need for his school to run free breakfast and lunch programmes. However, when individual hungry children were identified their school did not hesitate to provide food, contact parents, and if hunger persisted, follow up with available social services.



All of the principals responded to hungry children by feeding them. They also suggested that many schools with similar needs viewed the issue differently and did not feed children:

If one child is hungry then I think it's an important problem. So in that sense there's an individual way of looking at this. If there are a lot of children hungry then it grows even bigger. We shouldn't have hungry children. It's quite simple really.

(Principal C)

The principals agreed there were health and learning risks for children. They mentioned truancy, diabetes, obesity, and stealing food as risks. Principal A described some of the risks children faced as reasons why their school had set up food programmes:

Sometimes they weren't attending school at all because they didn't have food. Sometimes they were so hungry that they weren't able to concentrate. Sometimes they had a whole host of other health issues that came from not having the correct kind of nutrients in their food.

(Principal A)

Principal C suggested that if schools don't deal with school hunger then possibly no one will. He believed that no group in society should be disadvantaged by hunger. Each principal felt that school hunger was not just a school issue, but one that the whole of society needed to address. Children in Principal A and B schools were truant less often because food was available. Both of these principals also saw the importance of children eating together for social skills education reasons. In their respective schools minimising shame and delivering key health messages were integral to successful food programmes:

Children should be able to come to breakfast club or ask for food and we should provide it. It is important the message is clear that we eat well to learn well. That's the message I guess that I promote. It's my responsibility to make sure the kids are fed well, as far

as we know, and they have that message given to them every day.

(Principal B)

Principal A's school had been providing food to hungry children since 1991, while Principal B's school had done so for the last 8 years. Each agreed that learning and attendance improved, while antisocial behaviours reduced dramatically, when hungry children were fed. They both thought the problem of hungry children was getting worse not better. Principal C admitted the size of the problem was a difficult question because it would be a matter of degrees in any school.

All of the principals agreed that children had basic rights to food and shelter, and intimated that children also had the right to caring adults in their lives whether they were at home, in the community, or schools. They also understood that children should know that teachers cared about them and that a meal was available if they needed one at school. Principal A suggested that at any one time, 8 percent of their students relied on the school as a safe haven.

When asked how New Zealand compared with other countries Principal C related his experience with school meals in the UK, but had not discussed any of the programmes in the context of hungry children while there. Principal A suggested that New Zealand, with its small population, could have expected people to talk about the problem of hungry children in schools. She personally had talked to various Health, Education and Social agencies about the issue, but felt those government departments didn't see there was a problem or act in constructive ways to address it. In her opinion the ad hoc nature of Government intervention and funding for social services appeared disjointed and was personally frustrating. Consequently she saw the Government approach as piecemeal. When comparing other countries in general with New Zealand, Principal B noted that schools were deliberately manipulated through government regulation. She commented that no government official had been to the

school and looked at the integrated social and health programmes available there before National Administration Guidelines were changed:

It would have been better if they had gone to schools and seen what they were doing, and then worked with schools rather than saying, 'you will', 'you won't', I don't believe that's the way of making people do stuff.

(Principal B)

Principal A felt all schools had a holistic responsibility to provide the means for children to learn. Part of her school's response was a breakfast and lunch programme. Her school also funded a variety of support programmes for children and families including parenting programmes, budgeting advice and grief counselling. Principal B also believed her school provided an environment where no shame is attached to children who are hungry. As a practice her school provided lunch and breakfast to all comers. Principal C agreed that the first responsibility of a school was to feed a hungry child:

I would say that if a child was clearly hungry the first thing the school could be expected to do is give a child something to eat. The second thing that a school could be expected to do is to follow up why there was nothing to eat that particular time. Thirdly if this was an ongoing situation then the school could be expected to follow it up with the appropriate agency to ensure that the child was fed adequately.

(Principal C)

When discussing the State's responsibility in this issue, Principal A thought the Government should require all beneficiaries to attend parenting classes. She also attacked the Government's second hand approach to social services through NGO's, government ministries poor record of coordinating and funding parenting type programmes, and their lack of understanding that many parents who needed these education programmes did not access them. Principal B believed the Government needed to ensure New Zealand food was healthy and safe, while also making sure staple foods were affordable. She understood that parents

had an obvious responsibility to feed their children, however children should not suffer through retribution against parents who could not meet those obligations. Her school fed children because they needed food. She did not agree parents should have benefits cut, as some suggested, because children did not deserve to be punished twice.

Principal C unequivocally placed the responsibility for children's care with their parents. However he suggested that the Government was responsible for the welfare of the neediest in society, including children. He also believed the Government had a greater responsibility than schools to make sure children were fed. No official document existed in their school which suggested schools had to feed children who were hungry, but schools did. Principal A suggested parents had the responsibility to care for their children, however many parents at their school were unable to do this and needed support and encouragement. She recognised that many of their parents faced multiple hardships, but ultimately wanted to do the right things. All they needed was a little support sometimes:

We've gone across cultural boundaries to do some of this stuff. Our parents really do want to do what is normal for parents to do. Some of our parents and their parents also have been down in that dip, so they haven't had good role models or knowledge and skills taught to them either.

(Principal A)

## **Question Two**

What do you see as the best workable, long term solution?

### **OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES**

Much that was discussed for the previous question by participants was reiterated for question two. Some valuable suggestions were made, and many of the views expressed in answers to question one were clarified in progressive dialogue.

The Ministry officials interviewed all questioned the sustainability and adequacy of existing free school food initiatives, while accepting that these programmes may have a role to play in a future solution. Primarily though all of the Ministry participants emphasised the need for a planned response in line with their existing departmental approaches.

For the participant from Ministry A the long term solution involved a degree of societal change. She noted the work the Ministry of Education was doing, through education campaigns such as Mission On, which aimed to change people's food choices and sedentary behaviours. The participant from Ministry B reiterated that a long term solution would require thought, evidence and a group of people to work together. She believed parents also needed to be taught their responsibilities through parenting programmes. In her opinion providing food every morning in every school was not an ideal solution. The participant from Ministry C suggested that New Zealand needed to get a good handle on the size and nature of the problem and plan multiple interventions at various levels. She suggested the key solutions could be parent education and affordable foods. In her way of thinking, school food programmes could be one of the elements of a solution.

The charity officials also advocated their existing organisational approaches to programme delivery, but agreed that only the basic and immediate needs of some hungry children were being met by their actions. Their programmes accordingly targeted the neediest children experiencing

unacceptable hardship. All of their organisations had looked at what worked best in schools and believe they had sustainable approaches. For the participant from Charity B, feeding children breakfast was the minimum response to school hunger. She also saw the need to address the wider social issues faced by young people. The participant from Charity C believed schools were overloaded already, but perhaps were not focused on the right things. He also saw the need for an easily accessed social service for people who wanted help and also for those who are not going to ask for it.

The principals believed the problem was in the lap of schools and the Government responses to date were either inadequate or piecemeal. They concurred that Government was the wrong place to start looking if you wanted to feed hungry children, however the Government had a role in acknowledging the issue and putting agency support in place; in the form of documented advice and guidance. Principal A doubted the problem would ever be fixed. She advocated that government ministries should be forced to work together to get them moving on the issue and suggested someone like the Commissioner for Children or the Human Rights Commissioner needed to document what schools were doing well to support children and their families. From her perspective, these best practices should be available to all decile 1 and 2 schools because they were examples of effectively addressing the issues. Principal B was also sceptical about the effectiveness of Government intervention. She believed government departments and agencies work in solos. Her ideal solution was for greater Government support for existing social, food and education programmes operating in schools, as these programmes already made a difference to children's lives. Principal C suggested it would be easy to assume that schools should monitor such problems and fix them because that is where most children are. He felt that schools were not charged with dealing with this issue, and if the Government decides they should be then they need to put in place the resources. However their school never hesitated to feed hungry children. He believed:

The best workable long term solution is for the State to take some interest here and ensure that families have the wherewithal and the opportunity to actually operate as a viable family unit.

(Principal C)

#### MINISTRY OFFICIALS VIEWS

All of the Ministry participants expressed reservations about charity school food programmes to feed hungry children. The participant from Ministry A questioned whether Red Cross type breakfast programmes were sustainable or educative of parents, and suggested they took away parental responsibility:

It's not necessarily the role of the Government or the role of the schools to provide those staple essentials.

(Participant from Ministry A)

The participant from Ministry B also questioned the effectiveness of such programmes in the Auckland region. The information available to them suggested that most of the schools targeted by charities were in a small percentage of low decile schools in South Auckland. Because not all hungry children access these programmes questions are raised about their effectiveness. However she did admit that charities may have some role to play in a final solution. The participant from Ministry C believed charity school food programmes were a First Aid approach. She also questioned the nutritional value and sustainability of such programmes especially when business donations of food and money were relied on.

When asked about the State funding of food programmes, the participant from Ministry A questioned their sustainability, and emphasized the importance of an education component in any sort of free food initiative. She suggested the Government funded Fruit in Schools (FIS) scheme incorporated these principles. The participant from Ministry B shared no views on this question. The participant from Ministry C however, suggested that any funded system needed to provide safe, adequate and sufficiently attractive food. She believed there were alternatives that

worked such as the Fruit in Schools initiative which reduced some inequalities and expressed the same view as the participant from Ministry A that it would also be important for any programme to have links to the curriculum and not just be a quick lunch.

When asked about tax credits or exemptions for charitable donations as a solution the responses were less informed than expected. None of the Government officials knew the details about changes to the tax system for charitable donations. The participant from Ministry A suggested encouraging charitable donations must be a good thing, however the issue of appropriate charities was raised. She also questioned the sustainability of donations because of the risk that they could stop for school food programmes.

The Ministry participants saw the coordination of social services as a vital component of any future solution. The participant from Ministry A considered the coordination of services to schools would not be a solution in the short term, but their organisation had begun to do this and should keep doing it. She described how the Ministry of Education and Health had worked together recently:

Each organisation has very different ways of working, different philosophies, different ways of prioritising target groups of people, and very different ways of operating regionally. [And] I think we often put a lot of time and effort into that coordination before we really get to the point of delivering a good service to our end users, which in our case are schools.

(Participant from Ministry A)

The participant from Ministry B was enthusiastic about the coordination of social services. The department she worked in already practiced collaboration with groups and agencies on multiple initiatives across the social service sector. She spoke strongly in support of groups already working together within communities across New Zealand and suggested people did not work in silos any more:



I think its imperative that people work together.  
Government needs non-government agencies, non-  
government agencies need Government. Coordination  
has proven to be a successful way of implementing  
some things across the country.

(Participant from Ministry B)

Collaboration was also considered vital to the participant from Ministry C,  
particularly when dealing with children in schools. Her department already  
worked closely with a number of other Government departments and  
NGOs. It was important to know what other agencies planned otherwise  
duplication of services could occur. It was also important that agencies  
delivered consistent messages:

I think coordination is vitally important and that probably  
if we did more of it we might find more resources  
available and they may be able to be better targeted.

(Participant from Ministry C)

Involving communities at some level in solutions seemed a strong principle  
for all of the Ministry officials:

So it becomes a matter of working out what are the  
consistent approaches across the whole country that  
we need to have, how much can be amended at a  
regional level to be more meaningful for regional  
communities.

(Participant from Ministry A)

And

In any work that anybody at the moment does in  
central, NGO or local government the first port of call is  
usually the community. I think we've learnt about  
communities being involved.

(Participant from Ministry B)

And

I think that's a critical component to whatever strategy  
you put in place.

(Participant from Ministry C)

They also agreed that education was an important element of any solution. The participant from Ministry A believed that people in New Zealand were ready to respond to the current education media campaign which highlighted healthy eating issues. The participant from Ministry B also discussed education in terms of a key strategy. She pointed out that education programmes in communities had increased recently. Their ministry's challenge was adapting communication forms to suit different ethnic and cultural mixes in the population:

I think educating parents about providing the needs for their children and where to get help is important.

(Participant from Ministry B)

The participant from Ministry C noted that children spent a lot of time in educational settings. She suggested children needed health information and healthy lifestyle messages, but those messages needed the support of their wider community and families. Nutrition messages in schools therefore needed to be woven into lessons in ingenious ways.

The participant from Ministry B suggested schools needed to establish whether there was a problem before:

...buying into a scheme that was going to require resourcing and time and space if there was no one accessing it.

(Participant from Ministry B)

She also suggested principals from schools with a confirmed problem should get together to devise ways of dealing with it. The participant from Ministry C believed that schools had a part to play in a long term solution, but shouldn't have all of the responsibility. She believed schools needed to be persuaded to work in clusters, possibly with higher decile schools providing some resources.

The participant from Ministry A believed schools were trusted to know what was best for their communities. She emphasised schools had legal

autonomy under Tomorrow's Schools and this meant they could not be told what to do in terms of this issue. She suggested that the Ministry of Education and local District Health Boards were always willing to help schools with advice and guidance.

When asked what alternative approaches would address this issue in the long term, Ministry participants suggested that until people collectively understood the problem then a plan couldn't be developed to deal with it. The lack of evidence on the issue was itself a problem. The participant from Ministry C added that trialling and evaluating solutions and building best practice needed to be done.

#### CHARITY VIEWS

Initial discussion of a long term solution produced a mixture of responses from charities. However the charities placed themselves firmly at the centre of any long term solution to hungry children in schools because there were few alternatives. The participant from Charity A believed the Government needed to partner charities like theirs which have proven systems and a good track record. This would mean the Government would provide some funding to support the long term sustainability of charities and consequently the long term welfare of children. Ultimately she felt the Government could fund school food programmes, but what was really needed were ways to lift people out of poverty.

The participant from Charity B believed charitable people make a difference in the long term, and the Government seemed to have enough on its plate dealing with out-of-control youth. She believed charity was a community activity and an expression of generosity. For charity to be successful in any community people needed to know they could trust the charity to do good work. The participant from Charity B suggested that increasing welfare benefits would not help because people are already making poor choices and neglecting to feed children. To her, feeding children at school aims to break the cycle through love, caring and instilling basic manners and social values. As a personal decision the

participant from Charity B had never sought State assistance. This was partly because the State might interfere by imposing red tape and regulation. Their charity accepted money from their local Council because they were part of the community. The participant from Charity C believed that the food had to come from somewhere and charities are a ready answer. He discounted programmes which offered pre-packaged food for nutritional reasons. In his opinion children needed hot food to start the day and breakfast clubs in schools were one way to make sure they were going to get it. Also schools have been responding for years to this problem with programmes that worked. Neither did he advocate a return to Milk in Schools or a State funded system, because he thought the Government had other things to spend money on and the issue was not at the stage where Government needed to step in.

If we can do it through a charity system, as long as its good nutritional food, then I don't have any issues.

(Participant from Charity C)

In some respects charity participants differed in their views about the role of Government in any long term solution. The participant from Charity A believed that their programme should be supported by the Government because it worked. They had listened to what schools needed before designing their programme. Consequently their solution did not rely on volunteers, because a staff member in each school was designated to distribute food that was delivered once a term. As a result their system avoided the pitfalls of volunteer and resource intensive programmes. Alternatively the participant from Charity B felt the Government were too removed from the problem and had more important tasks to deal with. Nor did the participant from Charity C think the Government should be involved in paying for everything. He believed that if schools needed resources to feed children then charity was a good place to get it.

The removal of rebate caps on charitable donations as part of a long term solution also engendered a mixed reaction from charity interviewees. The participant from Charity B did not claim tax rebates for donations they

personally made and held the view that it was up to others to take advantage of tax credits. The participant from Charity C was in favour of changes to the cap on taxable donations, but questioned the affordability of such schemes from a Government perspective. The participant from Charity A was however enthusiastically in favour of the idea:

I think it's great, I think it's fantastic, that businesses have the opportunity to donate more money, and I hope that it will encourage businesses to do that, but I think businesses really need to have a good look at their sort of social conscience as well.

(Participant from Charity A)

While discussing the coordination of social services the participant from Charity A thought it was important that ten different organisations were not trying to deliver the same service:

I think you've got to find the best model and have that as the one that's adopted.

(Participant from Charity A)

She also believed better long term outcomes would result if charities and service organisations worked together, possibly coordinated by the Charities Commission. The participant from Charity B also agreed that local service providers should work more closely together and noted that a local church group in their area had talked about putting together a social service directory. She felt that different people in any community had valuable things to offer and there was no sense reinventing the wheel. The participant from Charity C suggested that the charity sector had become an industry where too many resources were taken up with multiple organisations administration costs. The social service industry, he described, was a competitive failure that the Government deliberately under funded because donations would top up the money needed. He advocated reducing the number of groups offering social services and organising charities more effectively. This would mean someone taking on a coordination role:

Maybe the District Health Boards could do it because they are responsible for maintaining a healthy society. It's got to be coordinated from somewhere, but it's not. The local District Health Boards run their own programmes, but they don't necessarily reach the people that they are aimed at.

(Participant from Charity C)

The charities all had issues with community involvement. The participant from Charity A believed that the different efforts of some communities to feed hungry children were laudable, however many communities put nothing in place and these children missed out on food. She suggested a national, rather than a community, approach was needed:

If you don't have a national approach to an issue like this then there are always going to be those children that fall through the gaps.

(Participant from Charity A)

The participant from Charity B believed the majority of people in communities were too busy to get involved with helping others. She also suggested that a large group within any community didn't see the problems and laid blame, while a smaller group gave money, and the smallest group did things for people. Consequently successful actions came down to the goodness of a small number of individuals in any community. The participant from Charity C believed that most people care about the community they live in, but don't necessarily see the whole picture. He believed there were distinct communities of interest within any district, such as the school community, and therefore communities as a whole didn't necessarily want to work at dealing with some issues:

I don't know that the communities where the breakfast is needed are interested in breakfast as an aspect of their kid's upbringing. This is because there are other issues involved, other things that the community sees as more important, like for example church and family. Churches provide money to families, but it doesn't necessarily get spent on kid's breakfasts.

(Participant from Charity C)

The effectiveness of education as part of a long term solution was a controversial area for charities. The participant from Charity A questioned the effectiveness of education for low socio-economic areas when money to feed children was the real issue. She pointed out that healthy eating education campaigns may have blurred the issue of hungry children in schools. In her way of thinking, healthy eating messages targeted children who had food. This made it quite obvious that many people didn't realise New Zealand had real poverty. She recommended education that showed people how they could help. The participant from Charity B felt that children should be taught basic life skills like food preparation in schools. She understood how full the curriculum already was, but also saw children in low socioeconomic areas needed to be taught food preparation, hygiene and social skills. She felt that part of these children's disconnection with society was because they lacked the basics:

Taking five loaves of bread and a couple of boxes of Weetbix to every family, I mean is that cost effective? Is that really going to do it? Or the Breakfast Clubs! Because it's more than just feeding their tummies -it works. It's just really instilling in them that they're worth it. Their manners and washing their hands and taking their hat off.

( Participant from Charity B)

The participant from Charity C saw the importance of educating people about healthy eating. He agreed that children were not getting the basic skills they needed from their formal school education. As a breakfast charity their organisation saw their next step as promoting nutrition education to children in the hope they would take those messages home. If parents didn't know what the right choices were then they needed to be educated.

When the charities were asked to look at the issue of school choice as an element of a long term solution, the participant from Charity A took this question to mean that given the choice of a fully funded free food programme, schools that needed it would take it up as long as there were

no additional costs. The participant from Charity B said food programmes needed the wholehearted support of school principals and staff. In her charity's area of operations some school principals had been sceptical to begin with, but were soon convinced of the benefits in behaviour and concentration when a breakfast club was started. If staff were in support of programmes then children accepted a school breakfast as part of their day. She also believed there was a definite need for some agreement between schools about the right way to implement programmes if they became mandatory. In an ideal world the participant from Charity C did not believe schools should have responsibility, or for that matter the choice, whether to feed hungry children. Instead children should have the basic human right to attend school with full stomachs. Neither did he think mass breakfast or lunch programmes should be foisted on schools. Instead schools should realise they have an obligation to take advantage of any charity programmes on offer if they have hungry children. He also suggested that some schools had stigma issues about being labelled as poor, which prevented them from taking up charity options:

If the programme is available and the school has a need then I think they have an obligation to involve themselves. I'm not worried about the stigma. Schools are in the low socio-economic areas as it is, but we've been told there is a stigma. It's hard to convince schools not to worry about that when the kids don't worry about the stigma.

(Participant from Charity C)

## PRINCIPALS' VIEWS

Principal A and B considered charity support a vital response to child hunger in schools. They believed that charity took pressure off school budgets and teachers pockets. Principal A suggested school programmes already worked in the absence of anything better:

Until the economic situation changes, or other stuff changes, I think charity or State sponsored food programmes are absolutely vital. We would be up the creek without a paddle otherwise. My gut feeling tells



me that charity food programmes shouldn't be necessary, but because it is necessary we do need them.

(Principal B)

Principal B also believed the key thing that made charity successful was really neat people who do wonderful things out of the goodness of their hearts. Principal C did not see charity as a long term solution, but as a short term intervention until the issue is taken care of on a longer term basis. He did not feel schools were equipped to deal with hungry children. Their focus should be on curriculum delivery. However, he was concerned that charity was dependent on charitable people, and there were limits to the number of these people.

Would it be fair to leave society's problem -that is societies- up to a group of charitable people and let the other people carry happily on their merry way being uncharitable.

(Principal C)

Principal A believed the State did not have the responsibility to feed hungry children, but did have an obligation to provide schools with the information they needed in the form of a collated list of all of the agencies that are available to do it. Principal B suggested it was clear the Government had other priorities and would not fund school food programmes. If they did decide to fund programmes they would have to ensure enough funds were available to provide quality food. Even though state intervention was needed, Principal B saw the shortfall in existing funding for other school issues like special needs, and for this reason doubted the Government would ever commit to funding school food programmes. Principal C was amenable to state funded school food because he had experienced school meals in Scotland, however he thought any state system needed to be set up and resourced well. On present form he felt the danger in New Zealand was for the State to bulk fund school food initiatives and leave schools to it. He felt that state funding could work well in the short term, but money should also go into supporting families to give them the means and wherewithal to feed their

own children. In his view, ideally the State should not need to feed children.

Principal A did not have a view on recent changes to tax credit limits on charitable donations. However Principal B was in favour of any move to help people donate money to charity. Principal C saw good things about the tax credit idea, but questioned the sensibility of relying on charity as a long term solution.

Whether our children should rely on charitable food donations long term, I mean on an ongoing or semi-permanent basis if not permanent basis, is questionable. I don't think that's something that we as a nation could be proud of if we ended up going down that path.

(Principal C)

Principal C reiterated that charity food programmes should be nothing more than a stop gap measure; otherwise they would have to be equated with state funded services such as schools, the health system and police.

The principals agreed with the idea of coordination in a long term solution, but had mixed feelings about its success. Principal A described a dysfunctional public service that had little idea what other organisations were doing in and around school communities. She reiterated the need for documented information about how schools already delivered cost effective social and education services to their communities. In her view the Government ministries should work more closely together:

There's far too much non-interaction between government agencies. Education [Ministry of Education] is putting a little bit in like Fruit in Schools for decile 1 schools. And then the Ministry of Social Development is saying we'll provide funding to give you some extra resource teachers in learning and/or some extra people for family group conferencing, or whatever it is that they are doing. There's no cohesion between the two.

(Principal A)

Principal B also suggested that things would be a lot better if the social service agencies could actually work together to find a solution. She believed some social service providers were interested in hungry children, but seemed to have other more important problems to deal with. Getting these government departments together was seen as problematic: “because they tend to be in ivory silo towers”. Principal C noted the merits of Government and school cooperation in theory, but in his experience coordination required an “awful lot of work” on the part of schools.

The community, as part of any long term solution, represented various issues for principals. Principal A described sporadic or unreliable community help with school programmes.

They come with great gusto for a week or so and then for various reasons they can't come any more or come only one day irregularly. So what we need to do, for our free breakfast programme, is employ a teacher aide to run it because the reliability of our parent community is very weak.

(Principal A)

Her school had resorted to attracting charitable resources from outside the area. Principal B's response concurred, in that her schools community did not have the strength to support the food programmes operating in their school. She described many of their families as at-risk, and consequently the wider district provided the volunteers and resources needed by the school. School parents in groups had attempted to raise money and do some things in the past, but these often petered out or people got frustrated with red tape and became disheartened. Principal C claimed the concept of community was frequently bandied about, but little understood. He suggested communities were not well defined and needed to be before anyone could ask them to accept responsibility for any issue. He believed this all needed to be done before talking about answers:

It's too easy to say the community is responsible for dealing with hungry children. [And] Even if we define the community, the next question is, can we say or can we expect this community to be responsible for this matter?

(Principal C)

Principal A saw that many school parents were frightened by the wider world and needed to be connected to it through education. Her school's holistic approach embraced family wellbeing. Families became a school responsibility for the sake of children's wellbeing and learning. Some schools found this too hard to do, but she felt it was essential that parents felt comfortable coming to school to learn. A lot of school parents couldn't make money stretch to the end of each week and therefore struggled with doing the basics. Also the government contracted programmes available in their community, missed the people that most needed them. She felt these people just didn't access those programmes, and unless schools broke down the barriers then things would continue the way they had been for most at-risk communities. In the absence of community support Principal B believed her school's breakfast club fed children's bodies, while the emotional and social literacy taught in her school were building the resilience children needed to overcome the hardships they experienced. Principal C did not think everyone in society agreed what the problem was; let alone how to fix it. He believed it would be wonderful if everyone was prepared to work toward the social and educational goals needed to make a just and fair society. However he believed that people didn't generally understand why families don't feed children or why they couldn't or wouldn't. Principal A suggested that people in wider society didn't ask themselves the hard questions and because of this no one could expect education to fix the problem overnight.

Principal A suggested school choice was a fact of life, consequently some schools chose to feed hungry children and others didn't, however many did not know where to start because the information on how to run and fund programmes wasn't readily available. She believed one of the reasons why the Ministry of Education would never require schools to feed

hungry children was because it would cost them money. Principal B knew that choice was an important aspect of Tomorrow's Schools, but suggested that schools had certain responsibilities of care and protection that went beyond rules and regulation:

As principals we are closely involved with the children so it is a real responsibility for us. They are ours for five and a half hours a day and we need to make sure that those things happen for them. Responsibility comes from caring and you can't mandate caring can you?

(Principal B)

Principal C acknowledged that schools had a choice under Tomorrow's Schools and had obligations to their school community. He also suggested the problem wasn't going to go away even if schools decided to deal with it.

Principal A believed parents who were welfare beneficiaries often got into a rut in their own homes. Just telling parents to go out and get work, when they haven't got the skills to manage their parenting role or face the wider world was pointless. Principal B suggested that making it easier for people to help rather than harder would improve the situation because a climate of giving would generate more support. She felt Government compliances shut down some initiatives and put a lot of people off helping; "We have lost the art of giving and respect for giving and receiving". Principal C reiterated that schools could call State agencies for support, but no one service seemed to have the power to monitor and advise on this issue:

If those agencies exist then why is any child coming to school hungry in the long term. Every school should be able to deal with it quickly and easily. No school should need a long term breakfast programme or lunch programme.

(Principal C)

### ***Reflection on the Responses***

For government officials hungry children in schools were symptomatic of a complex and integrated set of social issues. They tended to weigh multiple issues then prioritised, planned and acted within the confines of bureaucracy. In this respect their answers were consistent and informed. All of the officials questioned the effectiveness, quality and sustainability of charity school food initiatives, and their answers, while sensitive, suggested charity school food programmes were ill conceived and unsustainable.

The Ministry officials also showed concern about disadvantage and the associated social issues of particular groups in society and believed their respective government departments' efforts to educate parents and children were effective. They also believed New Zealand could respond more quickly to such issues because of its relatively small size, and their departments were already successfully working closely with each other and communities. To solve the issue in the long term they agreed that a planned and coordinated approach was needed that may see a role for charities.

Principal and charity interviewees saw children's immediate need for food as their first priority. They integrated best practices and education goals into their programmes and thinking. They agreed that parent education, coordination of services and a shared social responsibility approach was a part of any long term solution and that parents had the first responsibility to feed children.

The Ministry responses all assumed that free school food programmes were a Band-Aid response that did not consider the broader social and education issues. The principals and charities showed they were well aware of the broader needs of children and their families and had designed their programmes accordingly. All were aware of the need to provide consistent sustainable programmes, which included education components.

The concept of community involvement was viewed differently between participants. The government officials' assertions that community involvement was already a successful leading strategy in solving local problems, was challenged by the views of charities and principals. Principal A and B could not rely on their weak communities; instead their communities relied on them. Principal C had concerns that the concept of community was misunderstood by social services and Government, because communities were difficult to define or hold responsible.

The understanding of shame was also viewed differently by interviewees. For all of the charity participants and Principals A and B, shame was a key factor in the design and delivery of their programmes. The participant from Charity A said their programme avoided advertising that they offered their pre-packaged food programme in schools to avoid parental judgement issues. Their pre-packaged food was also given out discretely by staff to avoid shaming children. Principals A and B and Charities B and C ran breakfast clubs which accepted all comers to diminish shame. The participant from Charity C also felt many schools that needed their programme did not want to be labelled as poor schools. For the participant from Ministry B shame was a causal factor of diminished participation, which cast doubt on the effectiveness of free breakfast programmes effectiveness as a vehicle to feed hungry children.

The Ministry participants expressed confidence in working effectively with schools and each other as a current and future solution to school hunger issues. For principals the idea of cooperation with government agencies was nice in theory, but meant more work for them. Both charities and principals suggested they would rather receive support for existing programmes without the burden of Government red tape and regulation. Underlying the principal's responses was a lack of confidence in the State, because it had neglected the problem for so long.

The principals and the participants from Charity B and C did not support the idea of State funded food programmes. The participant from Charity A

however proposed the State fund their programme exclusively. The remaining charities and principals did not think it was the State's role to fund free breakfast and lunch services to hungry children in schools. They suggested the State had other issues that needed their attention and money. Questions were also raised about the way funding would be allocated, and its adequacy, given the way Government usually operated.

There was general agreement from the participants that the problem was one that society needed to take responsibility for. They agreed that education was a key strategy, especially parent education; however the effectiveness of existing parent education initiatives was questioned by Principal A. Her reasoning focused on the wasteful way initiatives were implemented through NGOs and service providers and the fact that those who needed the programmes the most often did not access them.

The participant from Ministry A did acknowledge that breakfast skippers could be between 10 and 20 percent of students, but did not differentiate between home breakfast skippers and children without access to home food or the means to buy it. The participant from Ministry B suggested there was a problem, but could not think of a way to measure or separate out the hungry from the 'fakers'. Likewise the participant from Ministry C did not think the department she worked in had sufficient information, but had enough information to know the problem was getting worse. She felt an interagency approach was needed to identify the extent of the problem and then come up with a plan. The participant from Ministry B suggested no one worked in silos anymore. However Principals A and B argued that government departments were out of touch and did work in silos.

Hungry children were described as a problem of degrees by Principal C. Their decile 3 school occasionally fed hungry children, while the other two decile 1 principals had had to put multiple supports around the issue. Principal A felt many schools did not know how, or where, to start; hence the need for some Government agency to find out and document what schools were doing well. Both Principals A and B had initiated the programmes operating in their schools. Their personal holistic views



about supporting and educating children meant they extended educative and support programmes to families and the community. For the participant from Charity B and Principal A and B, community trust and their personal credibility added to the success and sustainability of their school programmes.

Everyone interviewed agreed that school hunger was an important problem that posed risks for children and society, and should not be ignored. They each indicated that the organisations they worked in already helped address the problem to some degree. Every child's basic right to food was also affirmed. The principals and ministry participants agreed that some form of partnership should exist between government and schools to address the problem, but the strength of existing relationships was more positively viewed by government officials. The charities gave mixed responses to the idea of State involvement ranging from a full partnership to mistrust. All agreed that parents should be ultimately responsible for feeding their children. The means and wherewithal of some parents was also identified as an issue. Principal participants valued their independence in deciding how to deal with hungry children, and their approaches varied with apparent need. Their view of community involvement also depended heavily on local levels of deprivation, consequent engagement by their communities and the difficulty of identifying their community.

Few new solutions were suggested by interviewees outside improvements within existing resources and programmes. Many of the interviewees appeared resigned to the way things were and looked for solutions within these parameters. The need for evidence that measured the numbers and degrees of hungry children in schools was a critical limiter for ministry participants. Without convincing evidence, defining the parameters of the problem of hungry children in school, it appears little could be done at an official level that was not already in place. Officials did not appear to have accessed charity and school research on hungry children. Nor did they recognise that charities and schools had integrated health education

messages into their programmes. Instead existing school programmes were viewed by officials as a non-educative Band Aid approach.

The sentiments of principals and charities suggest some ministry or agency should look into providing information on the types and availability of programmes and services addressing poverty issues in schools. Principal A suggested the Human Rights Commissioner had been to her school and promised to send someone to her school to document their successful programmes. The fact that some schools provided programmes, while others that drew students from similar demographics didn't, was a concern of principal and charity participants. The 'How To' manual suggested by Principal A would certainly raise the issue for schools and example available and successful responses. It should be noted that various agency services with an interest in school food programmes have published some information in recent years. In fact schools appear to be inundated with seemingly helpful literature. Principal A noted a plethora of wasteful and inexplicable programmes and resources which crossed her desk daily.

The interview participants agreed at many levels, if not in the confidence they had in each others organisational approaches. All wanted to help children in their own way and many saw the need to work more closely together. In looking forward, New Zealand can maximise existing types of solutions through cooperation and education. This may lead to a better understanding of the practicalities of feeding hungry children in low decile schools and may raise awareness in those schools which don't agree it is part of their role. However, to move beyond the barriers of existing practices would require fundamental changes in thinking from participant groups.

In defence of the ministry officials interviewed, their awareness of the multiple social issues around the problem of hungry children in schools was factually adequate considering their different roles. They supported state approaches already in place, discussed what they knew fairly and knew to a large degree what they didn't know. All expressed reservations

about the sustainability of charity school food programmes and their effectiveness. They also agreed that not enough was known about school food insecurity. While they could define the social parameters of the problem, the problem still needed further defining and any solutions were expected to be shared by the whole of society.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

According to Freire (1993), people who are treated as subjects are able to make choices while those treated as objects are constrained from choice. It is not difficult to see Freire's 'subject' as more human. Freire also suggested, because people create their own history they become conscious of it moment by moment. Further his term 'conscientisation', refers to reflection coupled with understanding followed by action. The more 'conscientised' people becomes the more history they make and the more they exist. Conscientised people don't just transform a situation in their heads, but act to change it. Freire's theories help to qualify the unseen nature of the issues surrounding of hungry children in schools. They also emphasise the way the New Zealand public are treated by various political processes; as objects rather than subjects (Freire, 1976, , 1993).

In New Zealand, lack of information and populist beliefs, have produced little constructive debate on the issues around the problem of hungry children in schools. Consequently relatively few people are conscientised toward the problem. The people who make charity food programmes possible do however recognise hungry children as having basic and immediate human rights and needs. In contrast the machinations of Government toward hungry children have avoided acknowledging, measuring, or actually feeding them. Consequently hungry mouths in schools have necessitated school, charity and volunteer responses. Conscientisation at an official level is understandably difficult to define because there are inevitably tensions between competing social problems and political ideology. However, it is informed action which differentiates conscientised people and makes history. Therefore results, not intended outcomes, are important for conscientisation to exist. This means that justice for hungry children occurs when action is taken that feeds them. However the term conscientisation does not necessarily apply to actions which maintain a status quo which feeds some children and neglects others.

## ***Discussion***

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy.

(Dewey, 1915, p. 3)

This research began by examining how New Zealand and other nations responded over time to child food-insecurity in schools. It was found that countries like the UK and USA were primarily concerned with maximising the benefits of existing State funded school food. Such benefits included improved academic performance, learning behaviour, school attendance and nutrition. In these countries school food is also considered part of international commitments to child rights and world wide hunger reduction. Successive New Zealand Governments have been criticised for ignoring their international responsibilities for child rights, and have not provided meals for hungry children in schools.

The political assumption that economic prosperity will eventually eliminate poverty and its associated social ills is sorely tested by persistent poverty and child hunger in New Zealand. A strategy of getting more parents into work has created additional family pressures and discriminated against those on welfare. Low paid, often part-time employment, and shift work has increased family pressures. The school principals and charity leaders interviewed in this research suggested the problem of hungry children was getting worse. The participant from Ministry C agreed that indicators available on child nutrition confirmed the problem was serious and growing.

Although many politicians, bureaucrats and social service providers in New Zealand see their work as improving wellbeing, they are constrained by their conceptualisation that parents are solely responsible for feeding their children. For two decades, this uncompromising approach has accompanied an increase in poverty related problems, one of which is

child hunger in schools. By the close of 2008, little official action to solve the specific problem of hungry children in schools is apparent. There is evidence of official awareness, but this is bounded by processes, politics and thinking which is indecisive and poorly informed. Even if the problem were qualified and quantified beyond doubt the official response still seems unclear:

We don't understand why, we don't know why, children come to school not fed. We won't begin to understand until we can separate out the group of kids who are coming to school apparently starving and wanting food who've already had breakfast, from the rest of them. When you can actually truly see that there are a section of children who are not getting fed and there is a reason for why they are not getting fed, then I don't know how we would act on it.

(Participant from Ministry B)

An unknown number of children turn up hungry each day in New Zealand schools. These children's food-insecurity is a real dilemma for a bureaucracy wedded to statistics and school choice, and discouraged by their mandated priorities and systems from investigating further. Part of the bureaucratic dilemma is that the same children are not always hungry and the 'fakers' cannot be separated out. The view that some parents deliberately send children to school hungry because breakfast is available at school also clouds the issue, as does the assumption that some children prefer free school food to that available at home.

To add further confusion, the element of shame, a reported critical participatory and truancy factor was understood differently by those interviewed. School shame or image concerns were considered a barrier to some schools starting programmes. Parent attitudes to their children's school running a food programme was also noted as part of this limiting factor. Some parents were reported to keep children at home because they could not provide lunches, and many children supposedly experienced shame because they did not have food and their peers did. While the best practices of some schools and charities recognise shame, they do so differently.

This study has noted examples of school food initiatives across New Zealand and argued the hidden nature of hunger in schools. The problem is widespread and appears to be growing. In addition there is no clear chain of responsibility if families fail to feed their children. Obviously families and parents have the greatest responsibility, while schools would appear to have no official responsibility; but in many cases contain and attract professionals who feel and act responsibly toward hungry children. Those who volunteer and donate money or goods to school food charities also have no responsibility other than what they choose to accept. Neither does society as a whole, or unidentifiable communities within society, have any binding responsibility for children. Service providers, officials and elected representatives could be argued to have various levels of responsibility, but are constrained by existing systems of funding, service structures, priorities and politics.

Some would argue that hungry children are judged and punished for their hunger and poverty:

Our own research suggests that non-poor people can hold powerful negative stereotypes of the 'undeserving poor', have difficulty with the concept of relative poverty in an affluent society, and have little understanding of the way in which poverty affects life chances.

(Fabian Society, 2006, p. 20)

New Zealand human rights legislation suggests hungry children are everyone in society's responsibility. This is because rights in legislation are considered deliverable through practical and pragmatic solutions at a local level. Many of the interviewees agreed that hungry children are a problem for the whole of society. However without binding legal rights, arguments about who is responsible can go around in circles. Collective responsibility may work in a society which fully understands a problem, but can't be expected to work in an information-drought dominated by political propaganda and popular catch cries. In practice, collective responsibility translates into a small number of charitable people, and their material supporters, helping to feed some of the hungry children in New Zealand

schools. Real food insecurity is experienced by those hungry children who fall through the charity gaps, stay away from school or are prevented from attending.

Largely in silence, many schools face an increasing number of hungry children. Charities which support them, experience the disbelief of many and the support of a few:

I spoke to a group last week and there were people there that just couldn't believe that there was such a problem. I see it all the time. There's that group. There's also the group that want to help, and this is probably the smallest. There's quite a big group that are quite 'anti' the parents. I get a lot of- 'You're taking the responsibility away from the parents'.

(Participant from Charity B)

A majority of politicians in New Zealand have consistently pandered to society's ignorance, rather than promote informed debate or provide moral leadership - over two decades of occasional media attention. Several reasons for this reaction have been suggested, but ultimately the presence and persistence of school hunger questions the effectiveness of state social and economic policies. More disturbing is the possibility that Government leaders and their bureaucracies have become insulated and distanced from social realities. This would suggest that officials actually believe social programmes already targeting disadvantage will solve the problem, or that everyone already has access to sufficient food.

The persistence of a simple problem of children's empty stomachs is a constant indictment of the way New Zealand Governments dispenses social welfare and justice. State social strategies have enabled charity to feed some, while uncounted other children suffer the risks to their education, health and wellbeing. Without the practical intervention of Government to feed children in schools, a largely uninformed society is left to solve the problem. This society largely understands the problem in a culture of parental blame. Consequently children are discriminated against because of their family circumstances and their poverty.



The UK and USA have chequered school food histories in their evolution of State funded school food programmes. Both have experienced cost cutting, privatisation and deregulation, which led to discrimination, profit taking and poor food quality. More recently these countries re-regulation of school food has reemphasized the benefits of quality food provisions. The short -and long- term benefits of universal free meals in schools are also becoming recognised by these state's and their people.

Changes like these are partly attributable to vested interests, however it is recognised here that vested interests are integral to any political dynamics. In any political system vested interests strive to maintain and improve their advantages. The balance of these interests in countries with State funded school food systems are very different to countries which maintain charity as the only option. In New Zealand vested interests perpetuate an unjust system which discriminates against hungry children. This unfair balance of power does not serve democracy, because it consistently undermines it. More specifically the manipulation of debate and knowledge about hungry children by the State has aided discrimination, while at times actively pandering to a culture of blaming and shaming the most vulnerable. Government also justifies and entrenches existing social policy approaches through directed solution discussion, rather than issue debates. This means that successive New Zealand Governments have deliberately framed issues and solutions to fit ideological beliefs - again at the expense of hungry children. It has been suggested that justification for these tactics may be the avoidance of state dependency.

In countries with State funded school food programmes, like the UK and USA, parents are well armed with information about the benefits of school food. Much of this information is provided by Government-sponsored research. Thus school food programmes and their benefits have been legitimised by their funding and benefit status. Scottish parents, armed with growing evidence in support of quality school food services, have successfully lobbied and campaigned for universal state provisions. In the

USA and UK politicians and the general public have access to research which supports school meal budgets. Farmers, manufacturers and caterers who benefit from Government funding also use such information to lobby for the protection of their vested interests. This is a very different balance of common sensibilities and vested interests to New Zealand. Few politicians advocate feeding hungry children with State funds in New Zealand. Instead questioning the existence of hungry children has become a predictable political reaction.

The responsibility of government, or *governmentality* (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004, p. 25), is a central concept of this debate. It has been argued that the persistent ideological partnerships between State bureaucracy and ruling political parties in New Zealand, assisted by society's willing ignorance, has neglected a generation of children rather than create dependency, apparently in the hope things would gradually improve. An improved economy has not benefited those ill equipped to thrive in it. Government welfare and social service delivery has followed the principles of Agency Theory and Human Capital Theory, without providing safeguards or redress in legislation (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004, p.160). As a result the Government of New Zealand has repeatedly given itself license, without recourse to legal constraint or natural justice, thus effectively avoiding responsibility for ensuring hungry children's right to food in schools.

Public perceptions are a very real concern in New Zealand. Perception and reality can be socially arbitrated by social class and history (Lauder, Hughes, & Watson, 1999). Some schools are perceived as rich and others poor. Consequently food charity can be perceived as belonging in some schools and not others. Social judgements of either pride or shame may lead some schools to avoid school food programmes or abandon them. Child shame, a discriminatory factor, also affects participation in school food programmes. The charity Kids Can, has attempted to avoid parental judgements like these and child shame by not telling parents food is available, and by discreet teacher identification of hungry children. The

Red Cross type Breakfast Clubs generally welcome all children to increase the participation of those children who experience shame.

The Ministry interview participants suggested Government initiatives already targeted the problem of poverty and food insecurity. They also believed the Government already had the capacity to deal with hungry children in schools, if incidents of hunger were reported to them. When asked about a long term solution, those interviewed believed a planned response was essential. Each then argued in favour of their existing approaches to the problem. Officials were sceptical about the quality and sustainability of charity food programmes; principals were sceptical of Government department abilities based on past performance; and charities sometimes saw increased support for their programmes in any solution. Even though all interview participants agreed parents should be responsible they differed in their understanding of social realities and the capacities of communities to solve their own problems.

All the interviewees agreed that education of parents and children was an essential part of any solution. The charities and principals interviewed already integrated education into their school food programmes. The officials saw school food initiatives as a Band Aid or ad hoc measure, and unsustainable, rather than inclusive of an educative approach. Schools and charities had already recognised the opportunity to change attitudes and behaviours in children and their parents, through the programmes they provided. For the school principals and charity leaders interviewed; the Government funded parent education interventions available in communities were uncoordinated and often missed those who needed them. In saying this, the Government initiatives which engaged with schools, such as Fruit in Schools and Health Promoting Schools, were seen more positively by principals. While officials fail to fully understand the extent of existing charity initiatives in New Zealand, and charities and schools doubt the effectiveness and track record of State interventions; Government strategies to solve the problem may remain ineffective or worse - may limit the development of truly effective strategies.

## ***Conclusion***

This thesis maps a contemporary political dynamics of feeding hungry children in New Zealand schools. It has identified key factors which maintain a precarious balance of existing charity provisions, and points to areas where improved support and delivery could feed more children. What happens in New Zealand schools, where sometimes charities facilitate food programmes, has also been considered. Additionally barriers to solving the problem were discussed, as were the benefits, issues and problems with State funded school food systems.

The historical progression of free school food in the USA and UK challenges the adequacy of charity programmes in New Zealand. The reason for this is the nature of charity. Charity is essentially an emergency response, for those in dire need. It is therefore temporary to a degree, and may not be sustainable as some examples show. Currently charities are not meeting the needs of enough hungry children in New Zealand. Historically charity school food services in the USA and UK were followed by State funded food programmes. Charities still operate in these countries, but are not at the forefront of providing food in schools.

Compounding the problem of hungry children in New Zealand schools is the State's ability to limit official knowledge. A culture of Government prioritisation and a penchant for quantitative measurement has resulted in a failure to adequately acknowledge and address the apparently large and growing numbers of hungry children in New Zealand schools. If something is not measured directly and reliably, it may officially be subject to doubt. National research has been done, but has generally been disregarded as dubious. As increasing numbers of children have been fed by charities over the past two decades, successive Governments have appeared deliberately slow to understand the problem.

It can be argued that the State created and perpetuates poverty through governance, policy and practice. Additionally defining whether the New Zealand Government should be responsible is clouded by officials' and

politicians' uncertainty whether there is a problem. Political grandstanding and defending existing social policy also diverts attention and diminishes the issues in peoples thinking. Often political debates have been about political leader or party performances, rather than children's need for food. Nor do debates conducted by the media necessarily focus on children. Instead they often centre on wayward parents and their lifestyles.

While the interviewees suggested few alternatives to charity, and generally accepted the way things were in New Zealand, other discourses point to international solutions. One such solution removes shame, feeds more children, improves academic scores, improves student attendance and truancy and reduces health risks. It is also an effective vehicle for educating dietary behaviours. Free State funded school food is not a failed relic of social democratic welfare systems. It is becoming progressively popular in countries like the UK, where parents and politicians recognise the benefits. Because school food is funded by the State the responsibility for hungry children is shared by the whole of society.

There are also lessons to be learnt from history. Industrialisation created a need for organised charity food in countries like the USA and UK. Work force quality and production were directly linked to the quality of children's food. Consequently business philanthropy and charity food programmes increased in number, and pressure was put on governments to fund food programmes. These governments took responsibility because, among other things, it made good economic sense and was popular. New Zealand governments have avoided linking productivity and wellbeing to school food programmes. They have also done little to ensure population food-security and safety. This situation has created service gaps and continuity gaps, which in turn disaffect some people. New Zealand has not counted the long-term social and economic costs of a generation of children growing up malnourished and hungry. Education initiatives, while laudable, do not adequately address - and have not solved the problem of - hungry children turning up at schools.

Universally funded school food programmes arguably have more 'wellbeing' potential, are less fraught with side issues, and are more publicly accountable than the efforts of charities and generous people. New Zealand children suffer unnecessary hunger and an unacceptable lottery of discrimination and shame, while Governments pride themselves on a slim social welfare system. Human capital is not gained by this rigid adherence to what should happen. Agency Theory and Human Capital theory may work in an enlightened society, but in New Zealand it has given power disproportionately to ruling elites and created a social service sector geared to politically acceptable priorities. Political theories are not necessarily at fault however; it is their application that is unjust. This is because checks and balances constitutionally and legally are absent in New Zealand, leaving communities to solve such issues.

Many communities have other priorities than feeding children who are not fed by their parents. Also defining and identifying communities can be problematic. Moreover the views expressed at any community meeting may not reflect the often silent opinions of those unable to feed their children. Consequently parents who regularly do not have access to food may not be heard when solutions are offered. This research also found that feeding hungry children in schools was not necessarily initiated by communities, but often came down to determined individuals motivating others and making things happen.

The persistence of hungry children in schools exposes New Zealand as a country with serious child rights issues. Responsibility paradoxes and social conscience misconceptions have also flourished in the absence of balance and justice. Democracy is consequently threatened by power vested in narrow ideological pathways. Additionally the control of knowledge is a major concern, because informed debate could bring balance to this problem. Instead debate is stifled by the processes and actions of Government politicians and bureaucracy. This when every child's right to food is endorsed by New Zealand in international conventions. However rights tied to practical and pragmatic solutions in New Zealand legislation supersede these international protections.

Consequently children's rights are subject to political and social pragmatism, or 'common sense'. It is this common ignorance, not sense, which is challenged by this thesis. In reality this so-called common sense permits avoidance on a national scale. The excuse of pragmatism leaves the problem of hungry children firmly in the hands of local communities, schools and charity. Practical and pragmatic solutions at this level are expected to deliver non binding quasi-legal human rights. For these types of solutions to be fair, to work, and to represent social responsibility; an informed understanding must exist in communities and wider society.

Unpopular as universally free school meals would seem to be in New Zealand, ways are already found by Government to influence public opinion and control knowledge and debate. In the UK, trials of free food in schools have dramatically heightened support for universally free school meals nationally. Given this; justifying a state funded system in New Zealand may only involve trialling programmes and informing the public responsibly of the benefits. State funded school food programmes deserve a fair hearing in New Zealand.

This work was prompted by the apparent insolubility of persistent school hunger. It has exposed discrepancies in the way hungry children are viewed and treated, by mapping a contemporary political dynamics of feeding them in schools. Many of the notions reasoned here are inflammatory because they advocate for children's rights and against existing beliefs. Consequently arguments suggest critical weaknesses in New Zealand thinking about hungry children in schools.

Finally New Zealand children wait for care and feeding without blame or shame, while goodness grows more fragile each passing day. Society and Government need a change in outlook which includes, rather than excludes responsibility for hungry children. No child should suffer under the ignorance of a nation, nor should they wait to be fed in a land of plenty.

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## **APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTORY LETTER**

### **Hungry Children in New Zealand Schools**

Date

Dear

I would like to invite you to be interviewed as part of a Master of Education research project I am undertaking. The focus of the research is hungry children in schools.

I became interested in this topic when employed part time as a child advocacy coordinator in 2005/2006. Prior to this I worked as a primary school principal and teacher. I am conducting this project part time while caring for my three year old daughter.

This letter explains the rationale for the study, what the research involves, and what you may need to consider before you agree to participate. It is accompanied by a consent form.

#### **The Study**

This research examines the issue of hungry children in New Zealand schools. Government departments, schools and charities have various roles in alleviating this problem. An important part of this study is to identify the personal views of senior people within organizations that interface directly and indirectly with this issue. Their diverse collective views will reflect an informed understanding of the problem and may suggest a way forward.

I want to interview you, as someone with an informed contribution to make either at your work or a mutually agreed location. Interviews will be arranged at your convenience and should take no more than one hour. The interviews will be semi structured which means that while the same

general questions will be asked of all participants there will be some flexibility and freedom to allow for individual responses and clarifying questions. The interviews will be audio taped. A written transcript will be sent to you shortly after your interview and you will have the opportunity to delete or correct any material. You will also be invited to ask any questions or make any comments that you think are relevant concerning your transcript or the research.

All audio tapes and transcripts will be kept secure in a locked cabinet so that no one outside the project will have access to them. Your confidentiality is a prime consideration. Any material that could reveal your identity will be omitted and the findings written in a way that will preserve anonymity. The associated work including interview data may be used in my thesis, in journal articles, conference papers or presentations.

The archiving of data and the privacy and storage of personal information for this research fall under the University's Human Research Ethics Regulations which can be viewed at:  
<http://calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/humanresearchethics.html>

As a participant you will be kept fully informed of the research process. I endeavor to keep your interests, concerns and well-being foremost in completing this research. You will be able to decline to answer any question in the interview and to withdraw from the research without any pressure or coercion prior to transcript use. There may also be times when I need to contact you by phone, email or in person to clarify some of the data you have provided.

Once I have received your consent form I will telephone you to establish a meeting time for the interview and will send you a copy of the general interview questions. I can be contacted by phone at 09 298 3889 (home) 027 2908957 (Mobile) and by email: [manscombe@xtra.co.nz](mailto:manscombe@xtra.co.nz) if you have any further questions.

My research supervisor is Professor Martin Thrupp. He may be contacted at the Policy Culture and Social Studies (PCSS) Dept, School of Education, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand. Telephone: 0800 924 528 Ext 4907.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully

Martin Anscombe  
Researcher



## APENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

### Hungry Children in New Zealand Schools

#### Consent Form

*After being informed about the nature of the research and what is expected of me I consent to participate in the project.*

**I give consent with the understanding that:**

- 1. I will have the opportunity to change or edit the transcript of the interview I am involved in before it is used in the research.*
- 2. I may withdraw fully from the research at any stage prior to transcript use.*
- 3. Any material that could reveal my identity will be omitted or written in a way that will preserve my anonymity.*
- 4. All interview tapes and transcripts will be secured indefinitely in a locked filing cabinet in accordance with University of Waikato regulations.*
- 5. The data gathered in the interview may be used in the researcher's thesis, journal articles, conference papers or presentations.*

Name of participant\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant\_\_\_\_\_

Date of consent\_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher\_\_\_\_\_

Martin Anscombe (Researcher)

## **APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Hungry Children in New Zealand Schools**

***Do you think the issue of feeding hungry children in New Zealand schools is an important problem? Why?/Why not? (as applicable)***

*Supplementary questions designed to draw out responses if necessary:*

*Can I ask your views on...*

- 1a. The risks to society of not dealing with the issue?*
- 1b. The risks for children of school hunger?*
- 1c. The size of the problem?*
- 1d. A child's Rights in this issue?*
- 1e. How New Zealand compares with other countries?*
- 1f. School responsibilities?*
- 1g. The States responsibility?*
- 1h. Parental responsibility?*

***What do you see as the best workable, long term solution?***

*Supplementary questions designed to draw out responses if necessary:*

*Can I ask your views on...*

- 2a. Charity Food programmes in schools?*
- 2b. State funded School food programmes?*
- 2c. Tax credits for charitable donations?*
- 2d. Coordinating social services?*
- 2e. Community involvement?*
- 2f. Education as a solution?*
- 2g. Alternative approaches to address this issue?*
- 2h. School choice in dealing with this problem?*
- 2i. Charity programmes as a long term solution?*

## END NOTES

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**1 Decile:** is a rating system for schools based on a number of Socio-economic factors. The lower the decile rating the poorer the community where a schools children come from.

### **2 Article 11 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of children**

(1). The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

(2). The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:

(a) To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;

(b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.

### **3 Article 4 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of children**

States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation (Child Youth and Family, 2007)

### **4 Goals, outcomes and priorities of Government's reducing inequalities policy (extracts from the Reducing Inequalities: Next Steps report to Cabinet, June 2004)**

(1) The goals of reducing inequalities

The Government key goal for reducing inequalities is to reduce the inequalities that currently divide our society and offer a good future for all by better coordination of strategies across sectors and by supporting and strengthening the capacity of Māori and Pacific communities. It aims to ensure that all groups in society are able to participate fully and enjoy the benefits of improved productivity [CAB Min (02) 25/1B refers]

The key goal reflects fundamental principles relating to social justice - a desire to reduce disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity in order to achieve a similar distribution of outcomes between groups, and a more equitable distribution of overall outcomes within society.

Reducing disadvantage means trying to achieve some minimum level of wellbeing for all people. This means tackling poverty, unemployment, low levels of foundation education skills, preventable ill health and victimisation so that all members of our community have the resources and ability to participate in our society.

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Promoting equality of opportunity means trying to ensure a more equal distribution of the determinants of wellbeing across society. Some groups within our society face restricted opportunities (such as discrimination or low parental income) that limit their access to the key determinants of wellbeing such as a decent income, good health or adequate education. The aim is to achieve a society with greater equality of real opportunities, where family background, ethnicity or disability, are not major determinants of the life chances of individuals.

## (2) Outcomes

The reducing inequalities policy reaches across many sectors and requires coordinated action. Across government, reducing inequalities means a focus on the following outcomes:

- better health and reduced inequalities in health
- positive parenting and a reduced incidence of abuse and neglect
- high levels of participation in education and improved educational achievement
- improved labour market participation, greater access to sustainable employment opportunities and reduced unemployment
- higher overall living standards and reduced poverty across the community
- affordable housing of an adequate standard
- reduced criminal victimisation and violence
- cultural and ethnic identities are valued
- greater social capital and reduced social isolation.

## (3) Priorities

Government has promoted a wide ranging set of initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities, and many of these are proving successful. Based on analysis of the causes of disadvantage and 'what works', the following priorities are proposed for the future:

- ensuring a robust programme of early intervention for at-risk children and families
- addressing the income needs of children in low-income families through implementation of the Working for Families programme
- continuing the focus on the health needs of families/whanau across the life course through improving access to health services, particularly primary care
- increasing participation in early childhood education by groups where participation is low
- improving participation and achievement amongst young people at risk of leaving school with few qualifications
- improving access to education, training and employment for economically inactive young people
- addressing the barriers to employment and increasing incentives to find employment for disadvantaged groups
- improving models for ensuring high-quality and responsive funding and delivery of services for at-risk groups
- investing in communities and supporting community-led solutions
- tackling risk factors of poor health and improving access to services for those currently at risk of poor health outcomes across the life-course
- improving the quality of evaluative activity within the social sector, and filling gaps in information to improve understanding of outcomes and what works

(The Treasury, 2005b, pp. 4-5)